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ABSTRACT

This book analyzes educators' reactions to the floods that destroyed the towns of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks in South Dakota. It is based on a planning grant that had four primary goals: (1) create a curriculum to help students understand their flood experience; (2) perform a child-observation study; (3) script and possibly produce a flood-related puppet show for young children; and (4) establish a mentoring program that would bring teenage minority men into the classroom to interact with young children. Each of these practices was designed for use after any natural disaster as a way to help teachers and students regain their academic footing. The book describes the two communities and the widespread destruction they endured in April 1997. It details how the University of North Dakota's College of Education was awarded a 1-year planning grant to help educators create programs and conduct studies that would help other professionals, students, and families affected by natural disasters. The text describes the primary site for the grant and discusses the mentoring program, the flood's impact on the children, the development of a curriculum of developmentally appropriate practices, and the production of a puppet show to help young children understand what had happened. Five appendices provide further information, such as lists of child-centered activities. (RJM)

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Processes to help educators and their students recover from a natural disaster

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A Monograph for the Plan for Social Excellence
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Introduction

The Red River in Quieter Times
photo courtesy of Grand Forks Convention & Visitor's Bureau

Excellent Beginnings Monograph:
"Where Do We Turn? What Should We Do?"

Introduction

What should we do now? This question was on the mind of every teacher in Greater Grand Forks as the 1997-98 school year began. Just four months earlier, the twin towns of Grand Forks, North Dakota and East Grand Forks, Minnesota had suffered the largest, most devastating natural disaster in modern American history. More than 60,000 people were forced to evacuate their homes, businesses, houses of worship and schools on April 18 and 19, 1997, when dikes protecting both cities were breached and both storm and sewage lift stations failed, flooding both towns.

The Red River of the North, normally 50 feet in width, swelled to more than 15 miles wide during the flood. The force of the water lifted houses from their foundations and tossed cars into the upper limbs of 70-foot trees. The river water became a toxic ocean, filled with sewage, dead animal carcasses, petrochemical residues from cars and home heating oil tanks, and more.

Residents of the two cities evacuated to all 50 states. When they returned some four-to-six weeks later, many found their homes and businesses destroyed. For the rest, the tedious process of clean up and detoxification took weeks, and in some cases, months. Now, almost two years later, many are still restoring their homes, while farmers and others in the rural areas are still replacing basic necessities like wells and septic systems that collapsed from the weight and force of the rampaging water.

Schools in both towns affected

The flood did not spare area schools. Campuses in both towns were either severely damaged or destroyed. The teachers and administrators of Greater Grand Forks schools faced physical, emotional and professional challenges they never expected and for which they had no training or preparation. All but a few were forced to move their classrooms to makeshift schools. Educational resources had to be shared.

But greater than the physical challenge of locating and operating the schools were the emotional and professional challenges facing the teachers as the 1997-98 school year opened. The vast majority of the teaching staff suffered significant personal loss: their own homes were badly damaged, and the resulting financial loss was oppressive. Most found themselves in the highly stressful position of both working and living under make-shift conditions, and it was typical for the majority of the area educators to work all day in the classroom only to go home and work all night cleaning or rehabilitating their homes.

Further, although they knew that many of their students had suffered the same physical fate, the educators had no idea how their students' emotional health and/or learning ability had been affected by their flood experience. As it was, the students started the year with a learning handicap, as the flood had forced the cancellation of the last 6 weeks of the previous semester. A great deal of coursework had been lost. There was also justifiable concern about the mental, physical and financial health of the students' parents, many of whom were also working 'round the clock in a frantic attempt to restore their homes to habitable condition as soon as possible.

1997-98 school year starts with uncertainty

Consequently, all expectations were off as the school year began. And that's where this monograph begins. The teachers, researchers and administrators you are about to meet had never

lived through a natural disaster before, nor had their students. Their goal was to create a comprehensive project that would answer the questions: Where do we go and to whom do we turn after a natural disaster? What resources do we use? How are we and our students doing, and how do we go forward after a life-changing event like this?

As you read this monograph, you will hear the thoughts and feelings of this group of professionals. You will see what they did—and didn't do—in the wake of the disaster. You will learn what they wish they had done that in hindsight might have speeded their own and their students' recovery. You will read about extraordinary cooperation and partnerships that created new opportunities for excellence, and isolation that made cooperation practically impossible.

Goals of the Plan for Social Excellence Planning Grant

The professionals presented in this monograph were working with a planning grant from Plan for Social Excellence. The grant had four primary goals: 1) to create a curriculum of developmentally appropriate activities to help students understand their flood experience; 2) to perform a child observation study; 3) to script and possibly produce a flood-related puppet show for young children and 4) to establish a mentoring program that would bring teenage minority men into the classroom to interact with young children. Each of these practices was meant to be designed so it could be used after any natural disaster, anywhere, to help teachers and students regain their academic footing.

What you hold in your hand is a guideline, a book of suggestions you should find useful if you, too, have lived through a natural disaster or teach students who have. Besides the report on the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks project, you'll find a list of resources in the back of this book that you might find helpful in your own recovery. "This project wasn't just written for Grand Forks," says Glenn Olsen, the Director of the Planning Grant projects.

Today, two years after the flood, life in the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks schools is steadily improving. Several of the destroyed schools have been rebuilt, and now have state-of-the-art campuses and equipment. The teachers and students have either repaired their homes or moved away. The curriculum is back to normal.

Only the mood has changed. For as you're about to see, a natural disaster magnifies our greatest fears as well as our greatest human strengths, like courage, flexibility and vision. If life is the greatest teacher, then a natural disaster is the perfect opportunity to learn more about why and how you teach.

Where to begin? With the intention to make the learning experience even better than before. Here's how one group of professionals did just that.

The Sister Cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks

Wheat Field Farming
photo courtesy of Grand Forks Convention & Visitor's Bureau

The Sister Cities of Grand Forks, North Dakota and East Grand Forks, Minnesota

Grand Forks is North Dakota's second largest city, with a population of close to 50,000* (*pre-flood). Although East Grand Forks with its population of approximately 9,000 is one of Minnesota's smaller towns, together the two cities form the heart of a trade area that includes more than 250,000 people. Shoppers and vacationers regularly flock to Greater Grand Forks from as far away as Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 150 miles north; Warroad, MN, 180 miles east; Fargo, 75 miles south; and Devils Lake, 90 miles west.

According to ***Money*** magazine, Greater Grand Forks is the 8th best place to live in the nation (September 1993). The quality of life is very high. Housing prices are low (median home value, pre-flood: $65,000/median apartment rent, pre-flood: $320) and median income is above the national average. Residents enjoy short commutes, a low crime rate, blue-ribbon public schools, excellent shopping and dining, and a wide variety of both indoor and outdoor recreational activities, most of which are managed by the local park services with tax dollars. In addition, Grand Forks boasts the region's largest university, superior medical facilities and close ties to the Grand Forks Air Force Base.

Grand Forks was founded by French fur trappers, who used the river extensively to transport their goods to market. They called the area "*Les Grandes Fourches*," because of the convergence of the Red River of the North and the Red Lake River at a point between the two cities of Grand Forks, ND and East Grand Forks, MN. Steamboat builder D.P. Reeves helped organize Grand Forks County in the late 1800s, and Grand Forks' most elegant pre-century homes can be found along Reeves Drive today.

Population Diversifying

The people of Greater Grand Forks are largely descended from Scandinavian and middle-European immigrants. Norwegians dominate, followed by Germans, Russians and Poles. There are several different Native American peoples represented in the populace, including Chippewa and Lakota. Every summer, the area sees an influx of Hispanics who travel north from Texas and New Mexico to help with the harvest. There is a small Asian community that has evolved since the airlifts from Vietnam, complemented by Chinese students receiving their pilot training for China Airlines at the University of North Dakota. More recently, several hundred ethnic Serbs, Croats and Muslims from the war-torn Balkans have settled in the area, with more to come.

Grand Forks' population is greatly enhanced by the presence of the Grand Forks Air Force Base, located 13 miles west of Grand Forks. The mission of the base is to provide air refueling services for the U.S. Air Combat Command anywhere in the world. The base is home to more than 3,000 highly skilled personnel and their families. Its elementary and middle schools are operated by the Grand Forks public school system, and its ninth through twelfth graders attend Grand Forks middle and high schools. Although base personnel come from all over the country, many choose Grand Forks as their new home at the time of their retirement. The base and the town have enjoyed a friendly, cooperative relationship since it opened in the early 1960s.

Economy crosses all sectors

Greater Grand Forks has a widely diversified economy. Higher education, agriculture, medicine and manufacturing all attract people to the area. The farmland in Grand Forks County is some of the most fertile on earth, producing wheat, sunflowers, pinto beans, potatoes and

sugar beets. Every August, Grand Forks hosts the "Pasta Party on the Prairie," a two-day celebration of the foods grown in North Dakota.

In the industrial sector, Cirrus, a manufacturer of small airplanes, is new to the area since the flood, as is Longview Fiber, a manufacturer of cardboard boxes. American Crystal Sugar in East Grand Forks (and in other sites throughout the valley) processes more than 20 million pounds of sugar beets each year for Red River Valley farmers. The Mattress Factory builds and sells its high-quality mattresses exclusively in Grand Forks, and Badman Jewelry sells its hand-made earrings, bracelets and necklaces nationwide through QVC and the Internet.

Grand Forks holds other festivals over the course of the year, including February's "Frosty Bobber" fishing tournament on the Red and Red Lake Rivers, and "First Night," a New Year's Eve bash open to the people of the region. More than 10,000 people enjoyed First Night music, food and art displays on New Year's Eve, 1997/8, a true testimony to the spirit of the people after the flood. The Potato Bowl, a weeklong celebration of the harvest held every September, includes the world's largest French-fry feed and bonfire, a concert and dance, pancake breakfast, parade and a UND football game.

The arts flourish throughout Greater Grand Forks, too. The Chester Fritz theatre at the University of North Dakota, with its 2400 seats, brings in nationally touring theatrical shows and concerts. The newly renovated Empire Theatre in downtown Grand Forks is home to several of the area's performing arts groups, including the Grand Forks Symphony, the North Dakota Ballet and more. The Empire also features a wide variety of performing and fine artists, from folk guitarist Leo Kottke to the mythical scrolls of the Ojibway nation. Native American culture is celebrated at the Time Out and Waccipi at the University of North Dakota every April.

Government and other services abundant

Grand Forks is the county seat, and houses both local and regional government offices. These include a new 5-story government center, under construction since the flood, which will eventually house all of the local and county social service agencies under one roof. The Human Nutrition Research Center, a federally funded facility located on the University campus, produces internationally acclaimed research on the effects of minerals in the human diet.

Residents' medical needs are met by the more than 110 physicians located in the Altru Clinic, as well as by private practitioners throughout the area. Altru's Medical Park offers a broad spectrum of healthcare services on a single 80-acre campus. Altru offers surgical services in their acute-care hospital; chemical dependency and oncology services, sports acceleration programs, and more. Parkwood Place, Altru's retirement community, is adjacent to the campus. Altru has four satellite clinics throughout the region, and their home health care services reach far into the rural communities.

In addition, Greater Grand Forks is home to some of the finest elderly housing and nursing care in America. Valley Memorial Homes has been in operation since 1923, and now operates three facilities in Grand Forks, including independent and assisted living apartments and condominiums, two skilled-care nursing homes, adult day care, home care services and more. Since the flood, the Good Samaritan home in East Grand Forks has also been rebuilt, and Edgewood Vista, a residence for those with Alzheimer's, has opened its doors.

University is the largest in the region

Life in Greater Grand Forks is enhanced by its institutions of higher learning. The University of North Dakota, founded in 1883, is the largest university in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming and Western Minnesota, with more than 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

UND offers both on and off-campus programs leading to bachelor's, master's specialist's and doctoral degrees. Its Chester Fritz Library is the largest in the state, with more than 2 million items, and is complemented by specialty libraries in UND's medical and law schools. The university's John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences is world-renowned, training pilots, meteorologists, air traffic controllers, computer scientists and other highly skilled personnel for our nation's flight and space programs.

UND is also home to the North Dakota Museum of Art and, as mentioned earlier, the 2400-seat Chester Fritz Auditorium, both premiere arts facilities. UND's Fighting Sioux hockey team has won several NCAA tournaments, and will call a new, $50 million Englestad arena home after the turn of the century. And the Sioux Women's basketball team has won three consecutive Division 2 national championships.

Besides UND, Greater Grand Forks has several other institutions of higher learning, including Northwest Technical College in East Grand Forks and the North Dakota School for the Blind. In the lower grades, Grand Forks has two Blue Ribbon schools within its borders: Lake Agassiz and the former Belmont School (now Phoenix Elementary). Grand Forks students traditionally score approximately 15 percent higher than their peers in ACT tests, and average a full year ahead of their peers in basic skills. The average daily attendance rate is 96 percent, and North Dakota has one of the highest high school graduation rates in the country.

Of all its virtues, Greater Grand Forks' most distinguishing feature is the character of its residents. Never was this more tested than throughout the summer of 1997, when virtually every man, woman and child in both towns found themselves faced with rebuilding some or all of their lives. Today, through a lot of hard work and cooperation, both towns are coming back, "better than ever," says Grand Forks Mayor Pat Owens. Some experts have gauged the recovery from

the flood to take between 5 and 10 years. For some people, financially or emotionally devastated by the event, it will not come at all. But for the rest, Greater Grand Forks looks like a diamond in the rough: strong, valuable, with a deep inner beauty ready to reveal itself.

The Flood of the Century

Clockwise from top left - Aerial photo of Grand Forks during flood (photo courtesy of Grand Forks Public Information Center), April 21st Kennedy Bridge, April 21st Demers and Train Bridges, May 9th Lincoln Park, Early Flooding and Sandbagging, April 21st Burnt Ruins Downtown Grand Forks (remaining photos by Toby Baker, courtesy of University of North Dakota)

The Flood of the Century

The Red River of the North is unique because it is one of two rivers in the world that runs north instead of south. It forms the border between North Dakota and Minnesota, a line that appears almost straight on most maps, but in reality twists and turns like overcooked spaghetti. Fed from a string of large lakes along the border of South Dakota and Iowa, the Red also feasts every spring on the snowmelt from the prairie farms that embrace it along most of its entire length, from eastern South Dakota to Lake Winnipeg, in Manitoba, Canada. Because the Red is narrow and winding, the annual run-off has nowhere to go but out, onto some of the flattest land in America. Valley residents expect the Red to misbehave every spring; the only question they ask is, "How badly?"

In the winter of 1996-97, even the National Weather Service couldn't predict what the Red would do. When eight blizzards dumped a total of more than 100 inches of snow on the Valley, they predicted that the Red's flooding would be "severe." Their best estimate was that the crest in the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks area would be near 49 feet, some 21 feet above where the Red bursts its banks.

The people of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks were concerned, but didn't panic. The Red had flooded to 49 feet in spring, 1979, and with volunteer sandbagging and dike patrols 24-hours-a-day, only a handful of houses had been lost. By late March of 1997, the city of Grand Forks had opened a warehouse and filled it with mountains of sand, sandbagging machines, and wood pallets to hold the finished product. Thousands of residents willingly volunteered to tie and stack the bags, and worked continuous shifts 'round the clock. Their goal was to have 3,000,000 sandbags stacked and ready to go by riverbreak, which was expected in early April.

As residents worked, the National Guard arrived, and used heavy equipment to reinforce existing clay dikes around both towns.

Flooding threat grows

The residents and government officials of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks watched with growing concern as the southern Minnesota towns of Ada and Breckenridge were inundated with flood waters in early April. Citizens of Fargo, 75 miles south, were fighting fiercely to keep the waters at bay, but already, more than one neighborhood had been lost. The residents of the northern valley knew that the river would only get stronger as the icy surface broke and the water flowed their way. By the week of April 14, 1997, schools and businesses were on restricted hours or closed. The 60,000 residents of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks poured their time, attention and energy into building up the clay dikes with sandbags to withstand what was now predicted to be a crest of 52 feet.

Everyone worked. Those who were not able to fill or throw sandbags made sandwiches or babysat for the volunteers' children. Some patrolled the dikes, watching for leaks. Others drove volunteers to various sites or helped keep essential services open, like the hospital and jail. The Red was passing through the twin towns with tremendous force, estimated at over 600,000 gallons per second. The current swirled ominously whenever a tree branch or ice jam got in its way.

Evacuation included every resident

On Wednesday, April 16, the mayors of both towns warned residents in the low-lying areas of a probable evacuation. The Red was rising more than two feet a day—almost an inch every hour. Less than two days later, on April 18, 1997, several of the dikes burst or were topped when the Red grew to more than 54 feet. Whole neighborhoods were inundated in a

matter of minutes. By Saturday morning, April 19, the river collapsed the sewage and storm systems of both towns, and water started bubbling up from underground, even in neighborhoods miles removed from the 100-year flood plain.

Water started pouring down the streets, and within hours, 80 percent of Grand Forks was flooded. Essential services like water, electricity and gas were shut off to prevent electrocutions and explosions, and all 60,000 residents of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks were forced to evacuate, often with what few possessions they could grab with less than five minutes warning. The hospital, nursing homes, mission and jail were also emptied, as were the dorms, classrooms, labs and offices of the University of North Dakota. Miraculously, not one human life was lost in the evacuation, although many families lost pets.

The trouble worsened that afternoon when a massive fire broke out in the five-story Security Building in downtown Grand Forks. With all water pressure gone, firefighters could only watch in horror as the blaze consumed the entire block, including the editorial offices and archives of the city's newspaper, ***The Grand Forks Herald***. Then, sparks from the inferno leapt onto other rooftops, destroying what ended up as a total of 11 buildings on three separate downtown blocks. When chemicals dumped from firebombing planes did nothing to quell the destruction, firefighters resorted to helicopters to lift hundreds of thousands of gallons of the floodwater surrounding the building to douse the flames. It took more than 22 hours of continuous effort to get the blaze under control.

President promises assistance

The tens of thousands of evacuees found shelter in all 50 states, often with friends or relatives. However, more than 3,000 evacuees who could not or would not leave the area found refuge in one of the three F-16 fighter jet hangars at the Grand Forks Air Force Base, some 15

miles west of town. President Clinton and several members of his cabinet, as well as the North Dakota congressional delegation, arrived just three days later, on April 22. Although President Clinton promised $500 million in flood relief, no one could imagine that the estimates of damage would eventually triple that, to $1,500,000,000. (1.5 billion dollars).

When the devastation was tallied, an estimated 12,000 out of 16,000 homes in Grand Forks took on water. Only 8 homes in all of East Grand Forks were spared. Most residents could not return to even survey their homes for damage for one to six weeks. It took months for most families to "muck out" (clean out) their homes, sanitize them properly to get rid of toxic molds and mildew, and restore essential services like electricity, heat and phone service.

Besides the loss of homes, businesses and churches, the loss of personal possessions was mammoth. At the height of the debris removal effort, 120 dump trucks were carrying almost six millions pounds of refuse ***each day*** to the landfill. But the most major loss was people: close to 10 percent of the populace moved away permanently, and deaths, particularly among the elderly, rose precipitously in the months following the flood.

The biggest challenge following the flood was housing not only returning residents, but also the thousands of volunteers, relief workers and government and insurance agents who poured into the area immediately after the disaster. For those whose homes were either damaged beyond repair or would take months to restore, the Federal Emergency Management Association created what became known as "FEMAville," a trailer park of several hundred mobile homes. While some residents commuted to their damaged houses to work on them, others parked their FEMA trailers in their own driveways so they could stay close to the repair site. The two cities eventually bought out more than 1,000 homes, with several hundred more slated to be razed in the near future to make way for a new permanent dike.

Molds, mildew pose health threat

Health concerns were paramount in the wake of the flood, and continue to this day. The floodwaters contained a toxic mix of river debris, dead animal carcasses (including large animals like cows and hogs from area farms), fuel oil from home heating tanks and cars, and untreated human waste, since the water treatment plants had failed. In addition, food left in refrigerators and freezers had rotted by the time residents returned. As spring turned to summer and the temperature rose, a variety of molds and mildew took hold. They grew on basement walls, in floor joists, unreachable crawl spaces and ventilation ducts. The fungi permeated the legs of furniture and even lodged itself in the fibers of clothing, bedding and curtains that had not been touched by the floodwater, but was out in the open in the house. Respiratory infections and strange "flu" bugs became common, even though health officials hurried to condemn buildings and residents adopted the mantra, "when in doubt, throw it out."

Tragically, as after most natural disasters, abandoned homes and businesses were vandalized. Although looting was never reported, the Grand Forks Public Information Center admitted that there had been some "unauthorized salvaging" of fixtures and decorative items in some of the damaged homes. Robberies increased 273 percent from 1996 to 1998; physical and psychological abuse cases also skyrocketed. Among children applying to the Grand Forks Head Start program, for example, cases of abuse increased more than 5 times over the same period the year before.

Educational facilities devastated

The flood did not spare the schools, either. The Grand Forks School District suffered losses of more than $72,000,000. Both high schools were affected, all three middle schools, and nine of the 13 elementary schools. Two elementary schools and one middle school were closed

permanently; two elementary schools were later demolished, and only one was replaced due to shifts in the population.

In East Grand Forks, the situation was little better. Their schools suffered more than $40,000,000 in damage. All three elementary schools were affected, as was the middle school and both high schools, one public, one private.

For both towns, this meant that the 1997-98 school year started under difficult working conditions. Belmont Elementary School in Grand Forks, for example, was nothing more than a collection of mobile classrooms parked next to a hockey arena. Lincoln Elementary School was housed in the religious school classrooms of a church. South Middle School was forced to put half its students in one wing of one of the high schools, while the other half took classes in a nearby church. Throughout the district, teachers and students were making do and getting by as best they could with whatever safe, sanitary and secure resources they could find. Classrooms and lockers were shared, materials used sparingly. Ingress and egress routes changed almost daily as demolition of flood-damaged properties continued and reconstruction began.

The challenge of rebuilding begins

But tragedy also brought opportunity. Residents, volunteers and professionals quickly picked up Grand Forks Mayor Pat Owens' theme of, "We will rebuild, bigger and better than ever." The Grand Forks City Council created the city's first corporate center downtown, a 100,000 square foot office complex connecting two city blocks with climate-controlled skywalks. A city block that had been covered over as a mall was torn down and the street reopened. The federal government began building a $19,000,000 office complex to consolidate all of its agencies under one roof. Small businesses returned to the downtown area, and more than half a dozen restaurants opened or reopened. The Council bought more than $200,000

worth of holiday lights to brighten up the downtown streets, and the *First Night* celebration, held every New Year's Eve, attracted more than 10,000 revelers as 1998 dawned.

East Grand Forks quickly demolished their flood-damaged buildings and constructed two new elementary schools and a new middle school. Sacred Heart Elementary and High School, the area's only private school was torn down and rebuilt on the same site. In Grand Forks, Belmont and Lincoln elementary schools merged into a new, state-of-the-art facility the residents named Phoenix, to symbolize its rise from the ashes of tragedy. South Middle School was closed and sold to a private developer, and a new South middle school opened further south and west of the river in 1999. All the other Grand Forks schools went through extensive remodeling, including cleaning and mold removal, asbestos abatement, dehumidification and reconstruction. Ultimately, most of the school facilities were significantly improved.

Experts say the recovery process for the two cities will take five to ten years. The new permanent dike, a federal project, is scheduled to take a minimum of five years, and many estimate that it could take ten. Kevin Dean of the Grand Forks Public Information Center says, "The flood was like a forced urban renewal project. We didn't ask for it, but houses and apartments are now being brought up to code. We've cleaned, repaired or replaced more than 200 miles of sewer systems. Our streets are being repaved, and we may receive assistance from the federal government to move and update our water treatment plant."

New businesses and families are arriving, too. Cabela's, the world-renowned sporting goods store, will open a 60,000 square-foot facility in East Grand Forks in fall, 1999. Longview Fiber, a manufacturer of cardboard products, brought 200 new jobs to Grand Forks. CIRRUS, an aircraft manufacturer, grew from just a handful of employees to more than 200. Housing in both towns was rebuilt and diversified, as developers replaced the devastated neighborhoods

with single-family houses, townhomes and mid-rise apartments.

By early 1999, Grand Forks and East Grand Forks looked like two boomtowns. Building was up, unemployment was almost non-existent, and neighborhoods looked cleaner and brighter than ever. But underneath this busy, cheerful exterior lay uneasiness about the future and a discontent that such a tragedy had been "allowed" to occur. Rebuilding property was relatively easy compared to rebuilding lives and public confidence. This is Greater Grand Forks' most formidable challenge and its highest promise, both now and in the years to come.

Excellent Beginnings Offers Planning Grant

Clockwise from top left: Debbie Boushee, Jolaine Knain and Terry Arason with children

Excellent Beginnings Offers Planning Grant

In August 1997, just months after the flood overwhelmed Greater Grand Forks, The Plan for Social Excellence provided the University of North Dakota's College of Education and Human Development with a one-year planning grant. The grant was an opportunity for educators to create programs and conduct studies that ultimately would help other professionals, their students and families in communities affected by a natural disaster.

The Planning Grant incorporated the goals and philosophies of a traditional Excellent Beginnings grant. One of these is early intervention, focusing on pre-school-age and primary grade students whose educational success might be compromised by their environment. Another is recognizing the special needs of local children and designing developmentally appropriate activities to optimize their learning and skills. A third is to design educational programs that ultimately can involve a school's community, and a fourth is to involve high school-aged men of color as mentors to young children.

To accomplish this mission, UND College of Education and Human Services Dean Mary Harris and Dr. Glenn Olsen identified an advisory committee of 17 individuals. Every member of the committee was either a participant in, or part of one of the organizations served by the grant. The committee was made up of UND faculty, public school teachers, school counselors, parent educators, principals, Head Start directors and community outreach people. (See chart) Three of the committee members were consultants, chosen specially as experts for the Child Study (Sara Hanhan), Curriculum Development (Peggy Shaeffer) and Native American recruitment (Corey Sanders).

The committee decided on four projects. The first was the high school mentoring program, with mentors targeted for Head Start, kindergarten and first grade classrooms. The

second was a child study that would examine in depth the pre- and post-flood artwork of three children, but also consider the state of mind reflected in the writings of a group of older students. The third was a program of developmentally appropriate curriculum activities that could be used after a natural disaster. This curriculum would not be a lesson plan, but rather, a resource which teachers could use according to their needs and those of their students. The final piece of the planning grant was the creation of a puppet show, "Wanna Play Flood?" that would accurately reflect the experiences of children following a natural disaster.

Although the goals of the grant were clear, the path to their completion was not. Conditions after a natural disaster are anything but optimal, and the committee faced a number of challenges in implementing their ideas. As you'll soon see in the following chapters, compromise, flexibility and persistence became key to the success of the grant.

Ultimately, the committee, teachers and others prevailed. In a letter to Dr. Mario Pena, J. Sharon Gates, the Principal of Lake Agassiz Elementary School, where most of the planning grant activities took place, said, "The young men we had at Lake Agassiz as mentors were dependable and outstanding young adults. They truly took their role seriously. The students and teachers became very close to them.

"The curriculum study and puppet project will be studied and used this school year, 1998-99. The multi-cultural books that were purchased will become a part of the resources we will use as we do a school-wide multicultural extravaganza in January. (And) having Barb Kitko as our full-time school social worker has been a wonderful asset.

"Thank you so much for your and the foundation's support. You truly help make Grand Forks Schools 'A great place to grow and learn.'"

Lake Agassiz Elementary: A School of Excellence

Sharon Gates, Principal, Lake Agassiz Elementary

Cookie Mitchell

Lake Agassiz Elementary: A School of Excellence

Lake Agassiz Elementary School was chosen as the primary site for the activities of the Excellent Beginnings Planning Grant. This is primarily due to the fact that Lake Agassiz has a strong, vital partnership with the University of North Dakota that has thrived for the past nine years.

Lake Agassiz is part of a "village" of educational facilities including the University of North Dakota, Head Start, the Parent Education Resource Center, Adult Learning Center, Community High School and Preschool Child Center. All are located within a few blocks of one another. Lake Agassiz, in partnership with the College of Education and Human Development at the University of North Dakota, has pioneered programs that are at the leading edge of education innovation in America today. Consequently, Lake Agassiz has emerged as a professional development school with a strong reputation for helping create outstanding teachers and eager, capable students.

"We are committed to complex approaches to education," says Mary Harris, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development. "We want learning to begin with the student's experience, and to lead to integrated, relevant, connected experiences that lead certainly to strong basic skills, but also to knowledge of challenging content and ways of working on real problems in the real world.

"We're interested in holistic approaches," she continues, "including physical, social and intellectual development."

Lake Agassiz: A "Full Service" School

Beginning in 1998, Harris, Lake Agassiz Principal Sharon Gates and their numerous colleagues began implementing a "Full-Service" school model that was later extended to five

other Grand Forks schools. With substantial funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the six schools have added social workers and counselors to their staffs with the goal of using these family support services to further enhance the students' intellectual growth and general well being.

"The Social Work Department (at UND) has become more involved (at Lake Agassiz); so have Physical and Occupational Therapy, Nursing, Language, Pathology and Special Education," says Mary Harris. "We also have counseling interns there from our graduate program, and increasingly, recreation and leisure services students." The professionals set goals with the families of students, and the special services team sets aside one day per month to meet with teachers. "We wouldn't have had the time, resources or personnel without UND," says Sharon Gates.

Lake Agassiz is constantly populated with professionals and para-professionals. Says Harris, "We can always count on Lake Agassiz to receive field experience students when we need them. During any given semester, there may be at least 100 students from various UND departments at Lake Agassiz. Field experiences are an opportunity for students enrolled in campus methods and curriculum courses to observe the teaching of all school curricula, and to work in the classroom with small groups of children. They go back again and again to the well of practice to integrate their knowledge into their college experiences."

"Over the past nine years, we've been able to take everybody's strengths, put them together, and make things better for our families and the pre-service people at UND," says Gates. "It's a true collaboration."

Resident Teacher Program Helps First-Year Professionals

One of the most innovative programs in the Lake Agassiz/UND collaboration is the Resident Teacher Program. Students receiving their Master's degree in Elementary Education from UND are given a classroom at Lake Agassiz for one school year. These first year teachers receive support from a faculty member from the Grand Forks Public School system. That faculty member is released from classroom responsibilities for one year to mentor the three beginning resident teachers. The Resident Supervisor offers support, demonstration teaching, consultation, feedback and friendship to the new teachers. In addition, UND helps the principal coordinate professional development experiences for the resident teachers.

"Our resident teachers are employed by UND, but have the rights and responsibilities of Grand Forks Public School System teachers," says Sharon Gates. "They are full-time teachers who receive a small stipend, free tuition and course credit for their work."

The results of the Resident Teacher program have been outstanding. "We've had 100 percent placement of the teachers from our resident program," Gates says proudly. "Their employers say glowing things about them," Harris agrees. "The program benefits both UND and the Grand Forks Public School system because both are making a continuing investment. It makes a big difference in grant achievement."

Nationally-Recognized Professional Development School

In 1995, Lake Agassiz was recognized by the National Education Association as an Exemplary Professional Development School through the Teacher Education Initiative. In addition, Lake Agassiz was recently chosen as one of 20 professional development schools nationwide to pilot standards for professional development schools.

"One indicator of the success of Lake Agassiz as a Professional Development School is the extent to which its climate reflects a seriousness about teaching and learning, openness to professional sharing, and a learning community inclusive of children, teachers at all stages of their careers, and teacher-educators,"[1] say Jo Nell Bakke and Mary Harris in their report, "Lake Agassiz: Professional Development School." At Lake Agassiz, students' interests are taken seriously. They regularly brainstorm with their teachers to help create lesson plans that are meaningful to them.

"I'm very proud of the number of presentations we're making on the national scene," says Mary Harris. "We've achieved that just by trying to do our own work in our own community."

Awarded and Acclaimed Efforts

The first things a visitor to Lake Agassiz Elementary School notices are the banners. "National Blue Ribbon School, 1997" proclaims one. "Distinguished Title I School, 1998" reads another. The school has been showered with other awards, too. Alice Richmond Smith, a Lake Agassiz teacher, recently received the First Class Teacher Award from Sallie Mae. Her work stood out from more than 1,000 other highly qualified teachers nationwide. As mentioned earlier, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has awarded more than $750,000 in grants to Lake Agassiz Elementary since 1992. The goal of these grants has been to create an ever-increasing menu of programs and services that make the school a "full-service" center for the families of its

community while simultaneously enhancing staff development. And in 1998, Lake Agassiz received a three-year grant from the Plan for Social Excellence to become an Excellent Beginnings site.

The numerous awards and grants are even more extraordinary in light of the challenges Lake Agassiz faces. Seventy-six percent of its 517 students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Fifty percent of the parents of Lake Agassiz students are single, separated or divorced. The school turnover rate tops 30 percent each year. In a recent survey of Lake Agassiz's sixth grade classes, only 16 out of 50 students had attended Lake Agassiz in fourth grade.

Lake Agassiz also has one of the most ethnically diverse student populations in the entire state of North Dakota. Thirty-three percent of Lake Agassiz students are racial minorities, mostly Afro-Americans and Native Americans. The diversity is largely due to the neighboring University of North Dakota, which attracts a wide variety of people from groups underrepresented in North Dakota higher education to its hundreds of academic programs. Many of the parents of Lake Agassiz students attend UND.

Cooperation with Head Start benefits students and families

In 1994, the Grand Forks Head Start program, which serves 180 students and their families with special needs, relocated into a building adjacent to Lake Agassiz Elementary. The physical proximity of the two facilities has led to an ever-increasing sharing of resources and information that has greatly benefited the students and families of both schools.

"I see a better knitting together of family needs," says Cookie Mitchell, Director of the Head Start program. "All staff, including the principal, teachers and counselors, work together for a better transition for the families (from Head Start to the elementary school). This is especially true in critical cases where there may be foster care or mental health problems.

"Sharon (Gates) is flexible about meeting children's needs," Mitchell continues. "The counselors, teachers and others really know the children, and make sure the transition goes well."

The cooperation between the two facilities extends to more mundane issues, too. Cookie Mitchell will often "lend" one or more of her five buses to Lake Agassiz for field trips, so the

Lake Agassiz students can include more of the community in their learning experiences. In addition, Cookie shares her nurses with Lake Agassiz, particularly if there is an emergency at Lake Agassiz and the district nurse is unavailable.

"It's been a perfect match," Cookie Mitchell says. "The children and families are comfortable. If the child goes from Head Start to Lake Agassiz, we can continue their services. The parents can stay in our classes, which helps their self-esteem. We can continue to help out families with things like transportation and even food. Having the two schools together means a comfortable safety net where the parents know that problems they can't handle are solved. They trust us."

Extraordinary programs unite parents, teachers, and students

In the past decade, Lake Agassiz has created and implemented a wide variety of programs to expand the skills and knowledge of its students and school faculty while encouraging parental involvement and pride. Among these is the "Kids Come Together" Opera Company, sponsored by the Metropolitan Opera Guild in New York. Each fall, the school's sixth graders begin writing and producing an opera that is performed in March. Students create all parts of the show, including writing both the script and songs, performing, making the costumes, applying stage makeup and working with the sound and lighting equipment. Students also do the public relations for the show and serve as ushers.

The whole school gets involved in the Reading Intramurals, a year-round effort to encourage reading. Each class has goals and incentives, and every member of the staff, including the janitors and cafeteria workers, read to the children for 15 minutes after breakfast and during the noon meal. In addition, every classroom has a "Parents' Corner," specifically set aside for parents to read to their children or review their work.

Extended day/year boosts learning

For the past three years, Lake Agassiz, as well as the other Grand Forks elementary schools, has been on an extended day plan. School begins at 8:20 A.M., rather than at the usual 8:45 A.M., and ends at 3:00 P.M. The extra time is devoted to instruction in Spanish for students in grades 4 through 6, and to provide focused instruction in math and verbal skills for students in kindergarten through third grade.

Another academic boost is offered to students in Lake Agassiz's "Tenth Month" program. In June, students in the primary level considered by their teachers to be at risk for academic success are given four weeks of additional instruction. The curriculum is language-based and literature-intense. The students' progress is measured by pre and post-test results, writing workbooks, teacher evaluation and a parent survey. The Tenth Month program has been standardized and the results quantified to the point where it has been able to be implemented in other Grand Forks Public Schools as well.

Parental Involvement Encouraged

Lake Agassiz teachers and administrators make continuous efforts to invite and encourage parent involvement in their classrooms and activities. Despite the limitations on free time often experienced by single parents, 84 percent of the parents of Lake Agassiz students say they attend family activities at school, and 28 percent of the parents volunteer in the classroom.

The parents are given plenty to do and enjoy. Besides the opera and reading intramurals, parents are invited to "Bridging the Gap," a day for them to look through portfolios of their children's work. The portfolios are distillations of much larger collections of each student's work, kept by teachers throughout the school year. Each classroom also has a "Parents' Corner," a place where parents can read to their children or see their work.

Lake Agassiz's "Multicultural Extravaganza," is a good example of how the school involves its parents and other members of the community in the learning process. The Extravaganza has goals that both students and teachers follow to go beyond superficial activities, like learning to count to ten in a foreign language or merely sampling foods from another country. Instead of reinforcing ethnic stereotypes this way, Lake Agassiz teachers and students brainstorm activities that will increase multicultural understanding, respect and acceptance.

Teachers use the school's integrated curriculum of history, music, geography, literature, math and physical education to explore all aspects of life in another culture. They invite guest speakers into their classrooms, including University of North Dakota faculty members, students from the International Student Center, members of the students' own families and other people from the Greater Grand Forks community.

The school prepares its speakers before they arrive. In an essay entitled "We Are All One Family and Have to Take Care of One Another," author Mary Lou Fuller states, "...the speakers were urged to stress what life in their culture is like for children the age of those in the student audience. The speakers shared their knowledge through a variety of activities including cooking, arts and crafts, stories of their personal experiences, folk tales, games, music, traditional dress, etc."[2]

In addition, each child created a "family mobile" by taking home a round piece of cardboard and decorating both sides to show their family's ethnic and cultural history. The mobiles were hung in the school corridors. According to Fuller's report, the mobiles "received attention not only from the Lake Agassiz students, but from everyone who entered the school."

On the morning of the Multicultural Extravaganza, "...all of the students, teachers and community friends circled Lake Agassiz School, held hands, and sang, 'We are One.' " At the

close of the event, parents joined in the singing of the song as it was performed in the school gym.

Lake Agassiz Principal Sharon Gates reflected the satisfaction of all involved when she said, "Our month-long celebration did more to bring us together than anything we've ever done. Watching students and staff hold hands and sing songs in celebration of diversity brought tears to most of our eyes. Our students really learned to appreciate themselves and others."[3]

Planning Grant Activities at Lake Agassiz

The proximity of the Lake Agassiz and the Grand Forks Head Start program made for easier supervision of the mentoring program. In addition, research for the curriculum activities was simpler with the easy access to both campuses.

In addition, some activities were studied at sites off the Lake Agassiz campus. The East Grand Forks, MN, Head Start program gave curriculum researcher Tara Chiappa full observational access to the activities they were implementing with their students post-flood. Playwright Sharyl Elshaug-Dorsher conducted most of her research on local playgrounds and in conversation with parents in non-academic settings.

Finally, Lake Agassiz faculty is familiar and comfortable with the educators and researchers from UND. Their long-standing collaboration served as a reliable anchor during the post-flood recovery, giving the planning grant activities their highest chances for success.

Copies of the report: "Under Construction: Excellence in Education at Lake Agassiz Elementary School" are available from the College of Education and Human Development at the University of North Dakota.

1 Bakke, J. and Harris, J. (1998) Lake Agassiz: Professional Development School. Grand Forks: University of North Dakota. Pg. 44.
2 Fuller, M.L. Diversity at Lake Agassiz School. Grand Forks: University of North Dakota. Pg. 10.
3. Ibid. pg. 14.

Project #1: Mentoring

"He's really made an impact on their lives."

It is time for free play in Terry Arason's Head Start classroom, and a lot is happening. One child is standing by an easel, painting. Another has just put on a pair of headphones and pushed the "Play" button on a cassette recorder to listen to some music. Five or six children are sitting with a classroom aide from the Foster Grandparents program. They huddle over a table strewn with crayons, colorful construction paper, macaroni and glue. Although they are trying not to let the teacher see what they're creating, the little giggles and comments of "Oh, she's going to love that!" hint that they are working on a birthday project for their teacher.

On the far side of the room, Tyler Boaz is listening carefully. Moments before, three-year-old Monique selected the book "What's Up in the Attic?" and cuddled up beside the high school mentor on the carpet, "reading" to him. As she points to the pictures in the book, she wrinkles up her tiny nose and raises her dark eyebrows in a way that makes Tyler smile. "That's very good," he says, complimenting her expressions.

Monique finishes the book and goes off to another activity. Tyler then stretches out his long, lanky frame on the carpet and turns his attention to Trevor, who is assembling a puzzle of a helicopter. "What color is the piece in your hand?" Tyler asks. When Trevor correctly identifies it as blue, Tyler nods. "That's right. Now, where is there some blue in the pieces you've already put together?" Tyler is careful not to do the work, but his encouragement and guidance help the child quickly finish the puzzle.

Tyler reaches over to tie the shoelaces of one of the children. He then begins playing an innovative game of "Memory" with another student. The student does not want to match the pictures, as the game is normally played, but rather, chooses to count the images on the cards.

Tyler plays along. As the two are interacting, another boy is listening to Tyler's chest with a stethoscope. He seems comfortable with the children's attention.

"They really enjoy Tyler's presence," says Mrs.Arason. "Many of these children may not have a father-figure in their homes, so he's a good role model." Tyler is a star of the Central High School basketball team. His name frequently appears in the Grand Forks Herald sports pages for his excellence both on and off the court.

For Tyler, mentoring is fun. "I get to go outside with them; do the projects they do," he says. But it wasn't always so. "At first, I was scared, but after five minutes, I calmed down. I'm learning how to interact with them better. Now I think more like a big brother."

The children have accepted Tyler completely. "One girl wants to marry me, and a couple of the guys asked me if I wanted to have a sleep over," he says with a laugh.

Mentors aid teachers

"Being a mentor is almost like a teacher's aide position," says Tara Chiappa, who oversaw the mentors for the Excellent Beginnings planning grant. "Mostly, they do whatever the teachers ask, or whatever the children seem to need."

Grand Forks' first mentors were all young men of color recruited from area high schools. Their job descriptions included assisting in all aspects of the classroom routine, whether that was playing games with the children, interacting with them at the school library or gymnasium, or helping with reading or other classroom activities. "It's a lot like student teaching," Tara Chiappa says. "The teachers would share their lesson plans with the mentors so they would know what was going on."

Character important

The young men were selected by their counselors and teachers on the basis of their character. Because one of the goals of the program was to create role models for the children, "appropriate" behavior was expected in all situations and all times, anywhere on the school grounds. The mentors were to "dress appropriately," meaning they were not allowed to wear blue jeans unless the day's activity was going to be particularly messy. Mentors could not discipline the children, but they were encouraged to bring any concerns they had to the teacher or their Excellent Beginnings supervisor. Finally, they were instructed to respect the confidentiality of the students, teacher and the school, a rule that was particularly important after the flood, since cases of abuse increased dramatically.

Chris Olson was one of the mentors post-flood. He was assigned to teacher Renae Hillestad and her first grade class. "Chris was very nice with the students," Renae says. "He did everything I asked. It was wonderful to have another person to listen to the children read and to give them one-to-one attention."

Renae notes that Chris's presence made a big difference to one boy in particular. "Chris was extremely patient with him. He would sit and visit with him, talking about things other than school. It really made the child feel important. Chris also worked on writing with him, which helped the student catch up."

Excellent Beginnings mentors are minority males, and Chris is no exception. His heritage is Asian; a fact that Renae said brought a few amusing moments when he first started helping in the classroom. "They thought he couldn't speak English," she says with a laugh. "But they soon realized that he grew up in Grand Forks. It wasn't long before they started saying how 'cool' he was."

Olson says that being a mentor is enormously satisfying. "I'd get caught up in watching them do the things they do, all the things I remember doing. They're a lot smarter than they appear. They know what's going on. They're clever and funny to watch."

"Life's tragedy is that we get old too soon and wise too late," he says philosophically. "Being a mentor reminded me of that saying. So when they approached me, I thought, 'what the heck—why not help the children get a head start on that?'"

Although Chris is aware that he's a role model, he's humble about his position. "Those are some really big shoes to fill, and I don't feel I fill that void," he says candidly, adding, "while we teach our children about life, our children teach us what life is all about."

He says that being a mentor has positively influenced his career choice. Chris always planned to go into teaching; his experiences as a mentor confirmed his decision. He has the highest praise for Mrs. Hillestad: "She is an amazing teacher. She has a real flair for the job," and found that under her guidance, he wanted to do more.

Mentoring was something new

Chris Hanson was another of the mentors. "Being a mentor sounded interesting and was something I hadn't thought about before," he says. "I liked doing different things with the kids. When they went to gym or music, I'd watch and help. When we were in gym playing baseball, they would have trouble batting. With the teacher pitching, it was difficult for him to help, so I was able to do that."

For Chris Hanson, mentoring brought many surprises. "I didn't know that real little kids need a lot of help when they change, like getting in and out of snowsuits," he says with a laugh. "Some of them can't handle a zipper yet."

Then there was the question of language, with at least one child. "Halfway through the semester, there was a girl who came to class. She was from Bosnia, and couldn't speak English. I tried to help her speak English, and eventually, I got her to count to ten.

"Being a mentor was a great learning experience for me," he concludes. "I learned that I'm good with kids."

Sandy Bethke, Hanson's supervising teacher, says that Chris rose to the challenge of working with young children. "He said, 'I had no idea it would be this way. I may consider this for a career," she remembers. "Mentoring and possibly teaching became interests of his." She smiles. "He seemed to especially like being on the playground with the children. It gave him a little more freedom, and the children loved to hang on him. He's very sturdy."

Children react positively

"The children respond well to the mentors," says Corey Sanders, Native American Liaison for the Grand Forks Public Schools. "Mentoring is a positive thing, especially if there is not a father or male in the child's house."

"A mentor is one more adult or friend to talk to," says Tara Chiappa, "and after the flood, there were a lot of children who needed that."

The mentors made life better for the teachers, too. "Having a mentor in the classroom frees the teacher to work more closely with children with special needs," says Project Director Glenn Olsen.

"The relationships that our little people have with male models have become more positive," concludes Lake Agassiz Principal Sharon Gates.

Mentors benefit in many ways

"A lot of young people grow up without role models, and a lot of young men have limited experience with young children," Corey Sanders says. "Mentoring might help them become better fathers, and to realize the importance of education at an early level."

Glenn Olsen says that there are very few males working in early childhood education, and the mentoring program is one way to try to get more of them involved. Olsen says that he's always been one of very few males at professional conferences. "There's a high turnover in early childhood because of the low wages," he says, "but it's important to try to increase the number of men because many children have little or no contact with male role models until they are upper elementary school age, 10-12. That may be the point at which they have their first male teacher." Olsen attributes the absence of adult males in many young children's lives to the rising divorce rate. "Children suffer if either of the two parents is out of the picture," he says, "but in most cases, it's the male who's gone. It's important for them to see adult males up close."

The Excellent Beginnings mentors get paid minimum wage for their work, plus bus fare. They receive university credit for their work, which includes one hour per day in the classroom, four or five days a week. If they stay with the program for two years, they become eligible to receive tuition and expense reimbursement at the college of their choice. "The Plan for Social Excellence will fill the unmet need," Corey Sanders says. "Even if the student is accepted into an institution that costs more, like one in the Ivy League. The family and student pay what they can, and the Plan will cover whatever is left. The parents I talked to were really excited about that."

But the biggest benefit, according to Sanders, is the personal growth the mentors achieved through their involvement with the program. "If you can get young people involved in

this type of activity, they respond positively to it," he says. "The mentors liked the fact that they could contribute something. We could see both intellectual and social growth."

In addition, being a mentor is inspiring to minority males. "It's given them an opportunity to see that they have opportunities," Sanders adds. "They have some positive life experience and learn that if they do set goals for themselves, there's a way up."

Glenn Olsen says that the mentors' self-esteem is enhanced in other ways, too. "The mentors get lots of feedback and lots of love from the students," he says. "It's not unusual to see the children hugging them, climbing in their laps and wondering where they've been if they're out even for a day."

Wishes and Hopes

There were plenty of potential mentors in Grand Forks following the flood, but in spite of the benefits, it was difficult to get them involved. "Initially, the biggest obstacle was transportation," says Corey Sanders. "A school district that isn't as spread out as we are might have an easier time scheduling mentor placements." Lake Agassiz School is miles away from both Central and Red River High Schools in Grand Forks, and the city bus runs only sporadically. Many of the potential mentors were involved in extracurricular activities, and could not join the program because it was impossible for them to return to campus in time to participate. In addition, a number of students lived on the Grand Forks Air Force Base, and if they missed their bus after school, had no way of getting home. "I would like to see some type of transportation system developed through the school for the mentors," Sanders says.

Tara Chiappa says that scheduling conflicts made recruitment difficult. "Some of our mentors were short-lived," she admits. "They were only able to participate for four months, and then they were out."

Chiappa says the limited involvement forced her to adjust her plans for the program. "I originally intended for the mentors to meet once a week as a group," she says, "but there was no way to schedule an extra hour for all of us to get together. Instead, I stayed with them for an hour in the classroom.

"I would have liked the mentoring program to have been more structured," she adds. "For instance, I would have liked the mentors to keep journals. That way, they could have brought more ideas into the classroom. Then, I would have wanted them to talk about their experiences and implement small group activities that they have planned themselves.

"If the program was more structured, I believe the mentors could enjoy early childhood education more," she concludes. "Plus, talking to one another would have been good, because they would see that they weren't the only teenage boy interested in early childhood education."

In spite of the time limitations, Glenn Olsen is hopeful that mentors will like their classroom experience and choose early childhood education as a career. "It's harder than ever to get young men of color to teach," he admits. "Mentoring is one way to possibly change that."

Project #2: A Child Study

Before the Flood

After the Flood

Project #2: A Child Study

"Wen the flood km we had to lv"

Dr. Sara Hanhan leans back in the oak swivel chair in her basement office at the University of North Dakota school of Education and Human Development and smiles. A bright winter sun pours in from the six-foot tall window behind her, painting ribbons of warmth across the floor. In spite of its lower level location and its exposure, Hanhan says her office received no water at all during the flood.

"I was lucky," she admits. Behind her is a 10-foot cabinet filled with thousands of slides of the work of children she has studied over the last 17 years. Every one of the images is precious to her, a tiny clue to the true thoughts, feelings and needs of the child who created it. Hanhan is part teacher, part scientist when it comes to reading pictures. She looks for patterns, textures, recurring symbols and colors. Darkness and light have meaning to her; so does emptiness.

Hanhan reads pictures so she can understand. "Drawing is a chief mode of expression for children," she explains. "They may not have the words they want, but they'll draw. If you treat the children's work with respect and spend time with it, you'll gain an understanding of what they're thinking about, and what matters to them."

Sara Hanhan uses a qualitative method of study developed with the leadership of Pat Carini of the Prospect Archive and Center for Education and Research in Bennington, Vermont. The methodology relies on non-judgmental observation of a body of art or writing created by a child over a period of time. "You wait to see what emerges from the child's work," Hanhan explains.

"I've been working with this method since 1982," she continues. "It utilizes the perspective of teachers. It assumes that children are expressing themselves through their work, and that they are strong thinkers right from the beginning."

The Carini method sounds simple, but it's not. "The idea is to be descriptive, rather than judgmental; interpretive, rather than explanatory," Hanhan says. The observer must be willing and capable of suspending his or her opinions and feelings about both the subject and the child during the examination of the child's work. "Key to the process is a respect for each child as a thinker and a belief that each of us is at least partially knowable through our work."[1]

Post-disaster child study can help with understanding

After the flood, Hanhan was asked to perform a child study as part of the Excellent Beginnings planning grant. She knew that the best way to remain objective through the study process was to work with others, so she contacted two colleagues, Dr. Roberta Shreve and Dr. Karen Danbom, both of Moorhead State University and specialists in Early Childhood Education. Together, the three examined the work of three children who had experienced the flood. Their goal was to better understand what the children might be thinking and feeling after the ordeal. Ultimately, such information could provide insights to the people who were in the position to help children recover from the disaster: their parents, teachers, school counselors and rescue workers.

Hanhan, Danbom and Shreve asked professionals associated with preschool and school programs in Grand Forks for the names of children whose families might allow their work to be studied, and were eventually led to "Janey," age three at the time of the flood; "Heidi," age four, and "Sam," age seven (note: all names are pseudonyms). In all three cases, the artwork used for the study had been collected by the children's parents, both before and after the flood. Sam's

collection was the most complete, consisting of almost 200 drawings from the time he was four years old. Heidi's collection had 33 drawings covering a period of two years. Janey's collection was the smallest, with just seven drawings representing one year of preschool. The researchers did not know any of the children, and did not receive any information about the children's behavior either pre or post-flood from their parents. "We only met the children through their work," Shreve says. In all three cases, the children gave their permission for their work to be studied, and the parents had no reluctance about sharing it.

"We wanted as full a collection of each child's work as we could get, but it was very difficult to find after the flood," Hanhan says. Two of the three children had a portion of their earliest work washed away by the flood.

Understanding themselves first

Before the trio dove in to their examination of the children's artwork, they began by looking at themselves. To identify any prejudices they might carry into their study, they first created an exercise where they reflected upon what the word "flood" meant to them. "It wasn't about our experiences with the flood," says Shreve, "but simply what the word 'flood' meant to us so we could see what our perspective was."

In the study, they describe their common viewpoint: "Strong emotions associated with floods included fear, worry, sadness, helplessness, numbness, anxiety, disgust, and in general a feeling of being overwhelmed," they write. "There were thoughts of leaving and of rescue that included taking things with us, a sense of not knowing the future, of wanting to escape, of the importance of re-finding family and friends, of being connected and disconnected all at the same time."[2]

Making observations without judgement

Once they were aware of their own thoughts and feelings, Hanhan, Shreve and Danbom set out to discover what the children's might be. The process consisted of laying out the work of each individual child chronologically (where the pieces were dated) and examining it. The researchers first looked for patterns that emerged from each collection, and shared their observations in a round-robin fashion. These included things like most commonly used media, repeating shapes and colors, and the degree to which the artist presented details.[3]

"The process is that we'd take the picture and go around, each taking a turn," Shreve explains. "Each person would state something that she noticed, and we'd record the observation. We kept going around and around until you think there was nothing more to say, but as we looked more and more closely, more emerged, and what you hadn't noticed before came out. The chair would then be thinking of what patterns she was seeing from what we were saying, and express that to us. We could see clearly whether the patterns were changing. Then we studied the notes between sessions."

The group looked for themes, like people, water or home; and motifs, like "sharks" or "hair." Throughout, the focus was on what the researchers actually saw in the pictures, not what they thought the child meant. "You have to be able to suspend a judgmental attitude," Hanhan reemphasizes. "When you study the drawings, simply be descriptive, not explanatory. Don't guess about the cause of what you see. For example, if there are sharks in a drawing, don't ask, 'Did the movie 'Jaws' come out that year?"

After the group noted its first impressions, they chose one or two pieces from each collection to describe in greater detail. In each case, they deliberately chose one picture that was

clearly related to the flood or dated close to the time of the flood, and one that was not.[4] Their goal was to look for continuity and contrast in both the content and style of the children's work.

Janey's work was the most challenging to study. At the time of the study, she and her family were living in a FEMA trailer because their home had been destroyed. With only seven pictures from which to choose, the researchers chose one titled "FEMA trailers," and another that they called "Polka Dots."

The researchers' descriptions of these two pictures illustrate how the methodology works:

"The picture (FEMA trailers) is on manila-colored paper and was drawn using six crayons of different colors. The crayon strokes are light so the picture has a pastel appearance to it, and therefore does not appear colorful, even though a variety of colors are used. The objects are outlines only, and have not been filled in. At first the picture appears to have been drawn quickly and indifferently, but upon closer study it becomes clear that Janey has taken great care in the placement of lines. An example of this is the exactness used to avoid placing green grass on the purple zigzag steps." [5]

In contrast, "Polka Dots" is bright and colorful: "Our first impression of this picture was that it was a page from a coloring book with dark outlines calling to be filled in—which Janey did. The picture contains a house, a swing set, two clouds, a sun, and the lawn, all outlined in black and colored in different colors. The picture, made on newsprint, was colored with 'stamper markers,' each having a different shape on the point. Janey used these markers to fill the objects with dots."[6]

Value in every aspect of the work

"You must value what children do, no matter how simplistic it may appear on the surface," Shreve says. "It's easy to take the child who's very prolific and place more value on

that work than on the work of the child who does a very simplistic drawing. It's important to value what children are telling us, and not to jump too quickly into putting in your own interpretation of it."

Because Janey's collection was so small, the researchers were reluctant to draw any conclusions about the similarities and differences in her work. However, when they compared these two pictures, they noted that the drawing of the FEMA trailer had a subdued, static appearance, versus the polka dot picture that was much more colorful and bright, "with a sense of anticipation to it that someone may stop by and play."[7]

Heidi's collection was more extensive, with 33 drawings covering a period of two years. The main subjects of her drawings were people, especially those with smiling faces, animals, suns and rainbows. The team of researchers described one of her pictures this way:

"There are four people represented, all facing forward and smiling. Each character is a bright uni-color; one is pink, one is purple, and two are orange or rust. Each of the four figures is drawn with hair; the pink (girl) has long hair, the purple figure has a curly mop on top of her head and looks older and the two orange or rust figures (male) have flat horizontal lines on their heads. All four figures are smiling. Each has a definite round colored circle for a nose. The eyes are large and round with what appears to be pupils included. There is a bright yellow sun in the upper right hand corner and a multicolored rainbow on the opposite side with six colors discretely drawn next to one another; none of the colors overlap. The picture is well-centered and framed with grass at the bottom and blue sky at the top." [8]

Although this picture was drawn post-flood, another created the same month (July, 1997) stood out in sharp contrast to almost all of her other work:

"(It) was created with only shades of green and blue with black outlines. The picture is dominated by a large green house with a blue roof and with five characters inside bound by windows (There is a notation on the back side of the picture that states, 'Each family member in their (sic) window, including (the family cat).") Unlike Heidi's other drawings, there is no sense of happiness in this picture. The smiling faces that were part of each person in her other drawings are missing. Three of the characters have no mouths and none of them have clothes...the figures are together in the house, but are separated from each other."[9]

The researchers came to the conclusion that Heidi's pictures revealed a strong theme of people, especially her family. Much of her work featured great detail in the head area of the people she drew, particularly around the eyes. "Her work looks planned and completed with confidence," they said. "She seems to use color to help make things discrete and definable."[10]

Largest collection was easiest to study

Sam's collection, with 198 pieces, was the most thrilling of the three to study. "We could see the child, and the context of his flood work within the larger body of all his work," Hanhan says. "It was very exciting." Sam's mother had saved his work from the time he was four years old, both in large folders and in 18" x 24" pads of paper, a kind of "artist's sketchbook."

Repeating themes in Sam's work included aquatic creatures like fish, sharks, whales and sea monsters. He drew a variety of dinosaurs and vehicles, including those that traveled on land, water or in space. He illustrated many wild animals, and also liked to draw pictures of sports, especially basketball. The one thing that was noticeably absent was people, which appeared in only 18 of the drawings, and then without the meticulous detail that characterized all of his other work.

Hanhan, Danbom and Shreve describe his style: "The pictures in this collection appear to be drawn with a sense of audience in mind. Not only does Sam draw with great care, capturing amazingly correct detail and gesture, but he also communicates through labels. While the accuracy of his drawings provides the viewer with enough information to interpret the content easily, he leaves nothing to chance. In a drawing titled, *'Contry (sic) creek'* and *Contry (sic) woods forest,'* he also includes the labels, *'deer, baby deer, fish, baby fish, frog, baby frog, timber wolf, baby timber wolf, mountain lion, snakes, baby snake.'* In one elaborate dinosaur picture, he has drawn a variety of dinosaurs and then repeats the animal at the top of the page, labels it, and instructs the viewer to *'find one,' or find tow (sic).'* In his basketball series of five teams, he notes, *'The Raptors are the Best!'*"[11]

The researchers chose two of Sam's pictures to study more closely, which they labeled "Black River" and "Come Hell and High Water." (Note: the latter slogan was adopted by the *Grand Forks Herald*, which later won a Pulitzer prize for community service because they never missed a day of publication, despite the fact that their buildings both flooded and burned.) Here is how the researchers described these pieces:

"'Black River' is completed on a large sheet of tag board using water color, crayon and chalk. The tag board is stapled to another of the same size to form a pocket. Unlike most of Sam's other works, this picture does not appear to be drawn in pencil beforehand. The bottom two-thirds of the picture is painted in variable shades of black, giving it a murky look. The few objects in the water have been added afterward, preventing them from clearly standing out...Even though this picture has been completed using color, it is largely black and it lacks the brilliance of his other colored works."[12]

"Come Hell and High Water" illustrates the devastating fire that consumed eleven buildings in downtown Grand Forks after the town had already been flooded:

"It is a watercolor painting, first outlined in pencil and then in thin black marker before it was filled in with paint. It is drawn on a large sheet of manila-colored tag board... unlike most of Sam's other work, the water is not inhabited by his many water creatures. The action in this picture also takes place above the water. The large, single building with smoke pouring out of it is labeled '1st' in one place and 'Fist (sic) Bank' in another. Sam has also helpfully added the word, 'water,' to one of the hoses on the fireboat. The water in this picture is painted a colorful blue with a strong sense of fullness uncontained by riverbanks. There is no land apparent anywhere in the picture. Sam has used the flood to carry out his interest in vehicles but not his curiosity about underwater activity." [13]

The researchers concluded that, "Sam has depicted the flood through his art. He found use for the vehicle theme expressed in his drawings, but not his curiosity about underwater sea life. The action in the flood pictures all takes place above water as opposed to the very active underwater life noted in many other pictures." [14]

Writings of older children offered additional insights

To broaden their perspective, and hence, their conclusions, the three researchers then chose to examine the writings, and in some cases drawings, of a class of first graders who had been asked to reflect on what the flood meant to them. They also made a cursory study of the flood-related work of children of varied ages that was being displayed at the North Dakota Museum of Art on the University of North Dakota campus.

The writings suggested that the first graders had many powerful feelings about their flood experience. "wen (when) the flood cam (came) it was sckare (scary). I was rele (really) scard

(scared)" one child wrote. "I wovint (wasn't) sade (sad) and Mad," another child wrote. "My sistra (sister) was sade (sad)." Another child raged, "Wane (When) the flood cam (came) to my hose (house), i did not like it one little bite (bit) i was sade (sad) win (when) the flood cam (came) be cose (because) I loved my hose (house)!"[15]

In addition to emotions, the researchers found other repeating themes in the first graders' writings, including those of place, particularly as they related to home or travel. The children wrote about friends and family, usually with references to where the people they loved had gone or were staying while their homes were being repaired. They also talked about the flood as a "thing," rather than as a condition of the river. "In one picture, the flood had a face, as though it was something that came out of the river, like a monster" Hanhan notes. But one child had an entirely different explanation: "Win (When) the flood hapned (happened) the agal's (angels) have'd (have) a bath and win (when) its not stopieg (stopping) rinieg (raining) the angal's (angels) have a shiwr (shower)." [16]

Collaborative method enjoyable

All three researchers spoke of the joy of doing the child study. "There was delight all the way through the process," Danbom says. "I just love looking at children's work and finding the meaning in it. Plus, I love working with my two colleagues. This is a collaborative effort—we enjoy bouncing ideas off one another."

"You cannot study children's art without being amazed and delighted," Shreve says. "I think it's very much of value to do it (a child study) with children you know, with the caveat that you need to put aside your own preconceived notions. You need to set aside your expectations. This process helps us understand what the child is thinking about; what is on the child's mind. It's a commitment to understanding what the child is trying to tell you."

"I use this method because it makes me feel good about the child and the knowledge I end up with," Hanhan agrees. "This method works better if you're *not* a psychologist, because it doesn't apply cause-and-effect psychological principles. You don't need the 30 hours or months of time to do this that we used, either," she continues. "Just describe the child's work in terms of patterns you see, and any patterns of expression you can find."

The researchers found plenty of surprises in the children's work. "One of the surprising findings for me was the children's total lack of comment about possessions," Shreve says. "There was almost no reference to them. I think everyone's general feeling was, 'Oh, these poor children, they lost all their toys.'" Hanhan concurs: "There were almost no books or toys pictured in any of the collections."

Conclusions

"By doing this (study), we were finding out what the children were really saying they needed: the knowledge that the people important to them are there and safe," Shreve continues. "Mama was there, sister was there, so-and-so was there, and we saw how those people changed in their artwork. One child had bright, colorful drawings with people hanging on to hands and all dressed up, but her flood picture was dull and the faces became simple lines. The art of the child who was most prolific changed considerably. The difference was that he often drew pictures of water, boats and sea creatures—things happening on and under the water. But in the flood picture, there was nothing happening under the water. There were no more sea creatures. Even the fish were above water in his flood pictures. He also did a lot with machines, and those were almost absent in his flood pictures."

"This study confirmed my belief that children have a lot to say about what is happening in their lives," Danbom says. "It confirmed my belief that for children, the most important

concern is their family, and that it's not the things we give them. There were so many people who wanted to give things to children to make them feel good after the flood, but what the children were most concerned about were the people closest to them. As long as they had their family near them, they were OK. It stressed the importance of the family getting support so it can remain intact."

All three researchers recommend conducting a similar study after a natural disaster, if possible. "Even though you know the child is safe, do ***they*** know they're safe?" Shreve asks. "This process gives you information on how to move ahead, how to do things that are beneficial to the children."

Recommendations

"We are very quick to offer some kind of help to children, and what we're offering might not be what they're looking for," Danbom explains. "With this process, you can get a picture of the individuality that you need to address in a classroom. Don't assume that everybody needs the same type of therapy or way to express themselves.

"Few teachers take the time to look deeply at a child," she continues. "We're more likely to look at the group than individual children. This process really brings out the individual qualities that make children so special."

"So often, we as teachers plan by what we see, not what they (the children) see," Shreve says. "Many times we forget to take into consideration what the child is telling us. We often see their work as a byproduct of an activity, but this process sees it as something that describes the child."

"Use this process to help you provide more opportunities for the child to experience whatever he/she is most interested in," Danbom suggests. "Use it to guide your teaching, to bring those interests into the curriculum."

Ultimately, the researchers drew several conclusions from the work they studied. 1) Adults should pay attention to what children are trying to tell them through their drawings, writings, and actions. 2) Children need to know that the people about whom they care the most—parents, siblings, grandparents, friends and teachers—are safe after a disaster. They should also be told about the safety of emergency and rescue workers who are trying to help. 3) Children need to be told where they will be staying, if they are evacuated. If possible, that place should be familiar to the child. 4) Children need to learn more about the science of natural disasters, about how they occur and what can be done to prevent them or minimize loss.

"Doing a child study is a way of relating and responding to the children with sensitivity," Hanhan concludes. "But it's important to remember that children respond to disaster as they respond to all things: variously." The report concludes, "Studies such as this, while informative, are not generalizable to the experiences of others. The study gave us insight into these particular children's views, but it also raised many questions. Do other children respond similarly to disaster? Do their reactions to different types of disasters, such as fire, tornado, earthquake or hurricane resemble the responses of the children to this particular flood? We saw indications of differences among children of different ages. How much does age affect children's reactions? ...We noticed a difference in the type of information shared through visual literacy versus print literacy. What does this suggest when helping children understand a disaster? And most importantly, what is the best way to help children who have experienced a devastating event? Looking closely, with others, at the work of children is a beginning of this understanding."[17]

Note: All three researchers noted that they have extensive experience using the Prospect Child Study method, and have done weeks of study over a period of years at the Prospect Center. For those eager to better understand and utilize this method, the entire child study, including a list of resource referencès, can be found in Appendix D.

[1] Hanhan, S., Shreve, R. and Danbom, K. (1998) Wen the flood km we had to lv. Grand Forks: University of North Dakota. P. 5.
[2] Ibid. pg. 2.
[3] Ibid. pg. 4.
[4] Ibid. pg. 4.
[5] Ibid. pg. 6.
[6] Ibid. pg. 7.
[7] Ibid. pg. 7.
[8] Ibid. pg. 8.
[9] Ibid. pgs. 8,9.
[10] Ibid. pg. 9.
[11] Ibid. pg. 11.
[12] Ibid. pgs. 11,12.
[13] Ibid. pg. 12.
[14] Ibid. pg. 13.
[15] Ibid. pgs. 13,14.
[16] Ibid. pg. 15.
[17] Ibid. pgs. 24, 25.

Project #3: A Curriculum of Developmentally Appropriate Practices

"Where do we turn? What should we do?"

"It was a difficult year for the students, their parents and the teachers," says Lake Agassiz Kindergarten teacher Sandy Bethke, describing the semesters following the flood. "We had a lot of children who had difficulties adjusting to school. Many times I would take a deep breath, and tell myself that things would be different tomorrow."

If a natural disaster is unexpected, so too are the reactions and needs of young children who have suffered through the experience. "After the crisis, keeping children emotionally stable was a key concern," says Tara Chiappa, coordinator of the Excellent Beginnings curriculum project, who noted that classroom behavior changed dramatically in the months following the flood. Within a year of the event, many of the children were developing signs of stress, including more aggressive behavior.

Chiappa came to the Grand Forks area shortly after the flood, in August 1997, to get her Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education/Special Education from the University of North Dakota. She began her observational research for the Excellent Beginnings grant in April 1998, near the one-year anniversary of the flood. She spent hundreds of hours in classrooms and childcare centers on both sides of the river, including both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks Head Start programs, and Lake Agassiz elementary.

Teachers and parents felt stress

Chiappa had the advantage of objectivity as she began her research. She had not experienced the flood or the first year of its aftermath, and so she went towards her goal of developing a child-centered curriculum with few or no personal or professional expectations. Still, she was startled by her first encounters with area teachers.

"Peggy (Shaeffer, Tara's supervisor) and I interviewed teachers about what activities they were doing with their students for the anniversary of the flood, and many of them started to cry. They started talking about their own experiences and how they had been so concerned about the children that they never had a chance to heal themselves."

Betsy Kuznia, a kindergarten teacher at Lake Agassiz whose home was badly damaged, describes her ordeal: "The stress was terrible: I had my life turned upside-down while I tried to hold everything together. We were living in a FEMA trailer because our house was so badly damaged. My husband quit a new job and went back to his old one so he'd have more time to work on our house. Exhaustion was a problem. I had strep twice. I should have taken time for myself, gone to the mall, the library, to dinner with a friend. But I didn't."

Teacher Sandy Bethke was surprised by the fact that it wasn't just the children who needed her attention. "I had a lot of parents who wanted to talk about their flood experiences. It would have been great if there had been a place for parents to stop, have coffee and chat when they dropped their children off. I tried to be patient with myself, the kids and their parents." She noted that class sizes at Lake Agassiz were almost 20 percent bigger than the other schools in town after the flood, an effect of FEMAville being built nearby. "You wanted to do the best for each child, but it could be frustrating," she said.

"People were tuned into their children's' needs, but needed support from one another," adds Carol Helland, Director of the Parent Education Resource Center for the Grand Forks Public Schools. "People really did need to connect, but they were and are just stretched to the max. We're seeing very fatigued, emotionally drained, physically and financially spent folk."

"The children are resilient; it's the adults who need support," notes Barb Kitko, social worker at Lake Agassiz School. Nancy Birkmeier, Education Coordinator at Lake Agassiz,

agrees: "The teachers needed support. They were in a state of shock from what was going on in their own lives, not just those of their students."

"The adults were not taking care of their own issues, and as a result, many didn't see them in the children," says consultant Peggy Shaeffer, an Associate Professor of Teaching and Learning at UND.

"I wish I had had a guide of what to do. If I had it to do over, I'd help my teachers work through the grief process more quickly," says Cookie Mitchell, Director of the Grand Forks Head Start program.

Report offers stress information

Consequently, the planning grant curriculum includes information for teachers and parents to help them recognize and deal with stress after a natural disaster. (Appendix A offers two quizzes to help you determine whether you are experiencing stress-related problems, or not.) The report urges adults to look for stress in themselves, since "You cannot help others until you have begun to help yourself."

Adult reactions that can occur after a disaster include:

Denial or disbelief, being unable to accept what has happened or the loss that occurred as a consequence. These symptoms can be medically related to shock, or not.

Guilt, especially feeling that you as an individual could have done more to prevent the disaster. You might also feel guilty for surviving if others died.

Sadness. You might feel sorrow over the loss of people you loved, or your possessions.

Fear, including of the disaster that has passed, its consequences, or anxiety about the possibility of a similar event in the future.

Loneliness. According to the report, "Many people do not want to share their feelings with others. Even if a community is receiving aid and support, some will say, 'There are others who need help more than me.'"

Vulnerability, feeling as though your life is now somehow out of your hands. Many people have a difficult time trusting others after a disaster, including rescue workers who come to help.

Anger. It is normal to feel furious about what you believe to be the cause of the disaster, to be angry with yourself for not avoiding it, or angry with others for not intervening soon enough or more effectively.[1]

Children suffer stress, too

"As the school year progressed, teachers reported that some minor behavior changes began to occur in their classrooms," the writers note in their report. "Children were fighting with one another more frequently than normal, and possessiveness over belongings was significantly higher than usual."

The children definitely were changed by their experience. Cookie Mitchell says, "Some of the kids became shy and withdrawn after the flood. They wanted to know, 'Did I do something to make Mommy and Daddy so angry?'"

"There was more than the usual acting-out, and an over-possessiveness with toys," Peggy Shaeffer notes. "The children needed more reassurance than normal and to be told that it was OK to feel weepy."

"Children can feel guilty when a disaster occurs," the report continues. "They may feel anger, as well as sadness and fear. Children may also feel as if they may have done something to

cause the disaster to occur. Their reactions may manifest themselves in physical ways, such as stomachaches, headaches or changes in behavior." [2]

"There was a layer of recovery that needed to happen in the adult community, but the layer of recovery that needed to happen with children was so much greater because the children were so powerless," says Tara Muhlhauser, Director of the Children and Family Services program in Grand Forks. "All they could see were all these adults walking around crying, feeling hopeless." Although Muhlhauser notes that some adults tried to remain upbeat and positive when they were around their children, she points out that because the smallest children were not allowed to assist in the recovery, "They didn't have the same attachment to the 'hope.'"

For children in the foster care and child welfare system, the flood created a whole new set of problems. "These children had to leave their biological families, their foster families and their community and stay with foster parents in other regions," Muhlhauser continues. "After we came back, the foster care social workers had to do a complete reassessment of all of the foster parents to make sure they were in a position post-flood to care for more than the immediate members of t eir family." Many of these families could not reassume responsibility for their foster children, she says, because critical home spaces like bedrooms and bathrooms were destroyed. In addition, many foster families had physical and emotional needs of their own that precluded the presence of another child in the house.

Signs of stress in children

The report recommends that both parents and teachers watch for behavioral changes in the children in their care.

In **pre-school children**, these may include:

--More crying than what the child normally does

--A change in toileting behaviors, including bedwetting or regression

--Separation anxiety or irritability

--Nightmares

--"Magical" thinking, having fantasies of ways they can undo the situation

Stress in **school-age children** (7-11 years of age) may manifest as:

--Trying to make sense of what happened by talking about it

--Depression, including fear and anxiousness that the disaster could happen again

--Nightmares

--Worry over safety issues

--Clinginess or irritable behaviors

--Stomaches, including nausea, headaches and fatigue

Adolescents and teens may experience:

--Withdrawal, including isolation and confusion, feeling they are "too old" to ask for the hug they may need from a parent

-- Anger, including aggressive behaviors. Fighting with siblings and/or friends is common after a disaster.

--Changes in eating habits, either by under or over-eating

--Low energy levels

--Sleeplessness [3]

The report suggests that teachers and parents recognize the significant role they play in the post-disaster recovery of their children. "If the parent/caregiver or other involved adults react

negatively to the situation, the child will also," the report states. "While it is very difficult to remain positive when faced with adversity, children look to adults to model the best way to deal with the situation. Observing adults taking positive action with positive outlooks may make a significant difference in the way a child views the disaster."[4]

Tara Muhlhauser says that adults must remain alert indefinitely to the signs of stress in their children. "Kids don't lose their memory," she says. "We have to assist every child when he or she needs it, in their own timeline of recovery and within their own process and environment. It's a long-term issue for our community, and a piece of all of us psychologically and emotionally. We want to give it away, but we just can't. We could have another 75 years of memories around this event, until all of us who lived through it have passed on and left only stories for the next generations."

Children needed help

To determine the type of activities that were most helpful and/or healing to young children after a disaster, Tara Chiappa observed children in East Grand Forks childcare centers and the East Grand Forks Head Start program. These children, all under the age of five, were under the supervision of "Children's Crisis Counselors," adults hired by the Tri-Valley Opportunity Council of Crookston, Minnesota. Some of the adults were teachers; some were former child-care providers, and at least one was a psychology graduate. All had experience and interest in the well being of young children. Their role was to create and implement a variety of activities that would help children understand their disaster experience and "find their feelings about it," says Debbie Boushee, one of the counselors.

"We touched almost every child under age five in East Grand Forks," she says about herself and her colleagues. "We went to over 50 daycare sites, both in homes and in churches, as well as to Head Start. In all, we worked with more than 500 children."

The Crisis Counselors in East Grand Forks were not given any formal training. Instead, they got together and brainstormed activity ideas based on their own experience and information they found in the public library and on the internet. They even adapted some of the activities they found in Care Bears books on sharing, fear, change and feelings.

The counselors created a schedule of regular visitations to each child-care site, to help the children learn to expect their presence and become comfortable with their involvement. The counselors soon became more than activity directors. "Once the children got to know us, we would let them talk as much as they wanted, including about things like their parents' divorce," Boushee says.

Jolaine Knain, another of the counselors, said that the children appeared to be suffering from the stress of the disaster. "I worked with kids who were having behavior problems: biting, clinging, possessiveness, fearfulness, or those who wouldn't interact with the other kids." From her observations, one of the causes of the stress was that the children, "had no idea what was going on. They were uprooted and left town, but they didn't know why. They didn't understand why Mom couldn't just wash their toys and give them back. "

Boushee agrees. "Some of the children were really angry that they lost all their stuff. Some were mad at their parents because they didn't get to stay and help clean. They didn't want to go stay at Grandma's. They didn't know what had happened to their house, why it wasn't there any more. In all, the kids who got to help clean up healed faster, and knew that eventually, it was going to be OK."

The children needed varying degrees of attention, Boushee says. "Some wanted all of our attention, but others would be real quiet. They would sit and draw just using black crayons, and they wouldn't tell you what they were drawing. Some would make up stories because they didn't want you to know what was really happening."

Knain found herself counseling not just the children, but a lot of the staff and parents as well. "The parents were having trouble dealing with their children's behavior. They would say things to me like, 'He's so clingy, I can't get anything done.' Or, 'I'm frustrated and I can't get anyone to help me. How am I supposed to feed and clothe my children now?'"

Activities designed to encourage feeling, understanding

According to the counselors, one of the most popular activities was the "Flood bucket." "We threw all kinds of stuff in there," Boushee says. "Cooking oil, dirt, scraps, you name it. Then we closed it up for a week. Before we opened it, we had the kids put on masks and plastic gloves, just like they saw the adults do while cleaning up after the flood. When we opened it, did it stink! Then the kids could understand why their stuff at home was ruined after the waters got to it."

Boushee says that the children were not the only ones affected by the activity. "One of the teachers hadn't had closure herself. The flood bucket made her cry, but she later told us she was glad for it."

Knain says the children liked spontaneous puppet shows. She secured pairs of puppets representing several different ethnic groups of the area, including Hispanic, Native American and Caucasian. Then she'd present the children with a question or a situation, and let them act it out. "It was good for them to act out their feelings. They liked activities where they could express themselves without any fear."

Another popular activity among the preschoolers was "Sink and Float." The counselors presented a variety of different objects, and asked the children whether they thought each one would sink or float. "We wanted them to learn some of the good things about water, not just the bad things," Knain says.

Ultimately, the counselors said that any activity was better than none. "Once the kids started playing, they would answer my questions easily," Knain says. "If they were busy doing something, they're more likely to talk more."

The counselors worked in the preschool program from July of 1997, just three months after the disaster, until the end of January 1999. In spite of the length and intensity of their involvement, Knain said she wished it had begun sooner. "I would have gone in right away, like within days after they returned to town," she says. "I'd try to have something set up and ready to go even before people came back. The children really could have used something to focus on immediately after the disaster."

Looking back, the counselors knew their work had made a difference. "It was rewarding to see change in the kids, to see them start being themselves again," Knain says. She describes one little girl: "She was a foster child. Her foster family was trying to adopt her because she had been with them since she was a baby. But things were complicated by the fact that they lost all her possessions including her bedroom in the flood. In addition, the natural parents did not want to relinquish their rights. She would bite and hit, wouldn't listen, and was very stubborn and uncooperative at first.

"I kept a journal of her behavior at school, and would send it home every day to her foster mother," Knain continues. "The foster mother would then write comments about anything important that was happening at home that she thought I should know. I worked with her for the

majority of the school year, and now, at age five, she's able to play and cooperate. She's much more outgoing. She's still with her foster family, and she's doing well."

Even children less affected needed closure

Tara Chiappa spent her time in Grand Forks at the Head Start program and in Lake Agassiz School. Because many of the families from Lake Agassiz school live in low-rise apartment buildings, many did not suffer the massive property losses that occurred in low-lying parts of the two cities that were closer to the river. Still, the teachers were sensitive to the fact that lives had been disrupted by the event, and included activities in their lesson plans that allowed the children to express their feelings about what had happened to them.

Chiappa's first encounter was with kindergartners who had reenacted the flood. Using milk cartons of varying sizes, the children built their own town. "They were very clever," Chiappa says. "Each child got to pick the building he or she wanted to build. They knew just what a town needed. They knew that the town needed food stores, but that pet stores were important, too! Then someone mentioned that there had to be a toy store, so they added that."

When the town was built, they added sandbags to protect it. But when the table was flooded, the town was destroyed anyway. "They needed to see that it didn't matter how hard anyone worked," Chiappa says. "That the flood wasn't anybody's fault, and that the power of the water was just too much." After the town was flooded, Chiappa watched as the children started to rebuild it.

This activity was a favorite in many of the classrooms. Cookie Mitchell describes a poignant moment when the activity was conducted at Head Start: "As they were fixing the town, one child accidentally knocked over the building of another child, who started crying. But this one little girl just put her hands on her hips and said to her friend, 'It's OK. Rebuild, rebuild,

rebuild! I'll show you how.'" She laughs. "That's exactly what Mayor Owens had been saying for months."

"They really loved this activity," Chiappa notes. "Their attention span for it was incredible. Instead of just playing for a few minutes, they'd stay with the activity for over an hour."

Chiappa learned about a variety of activities that helped the children. One was using salvageable flood debris to create art. This included using unused leftover sandbags to make wreaths, or choosing an item from home that could be sanitized or used safely to make collages. "Using these things made the flood seem less horrible," Chiappa says.

Betsy Kuznia chose art and journaling as ways to help her students better understand their experience. She asked each child to draw two pictures and write two books on what was good about the flood, and what was bad.

"The good thing was almost always travel," she said. "They went to Grandma's or friends out of town. And the bad was that they had to leave their toys, their homes, their own beds."

Sandy Bethke turned to books for ideas. "Literature is good. By reading to the children, it gives them a chance to offer their feelings and opinions." She read "My River," and had the children discuss all the useful things a river provides. The school's Riley reading teacher read, "When the Flood Came to Grandma's House," and the class talked about their experiences.

"One of the most useful activities was having the children write or give spontaneous puppet plays," Peggy Shaeffer says. "They'd have to figure out what they'd do in a particular situation. The children always seemed to be able to identify what was most important, and made big problems work out OK."

Chiappa agrees. "The children didn't like talking about what happened in a question and answer format. They did not seem to mind talking about the situation, but they liked to do it in their own way."

Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum Created

"In any situation, particularly that of a disaster, children need to be able to develop and learn at their own rate," Chiappa, Shaeffer and Glenn Olsen, the editor of the curriculum, say in their report. "Children should be allowed to feel comfortable with what they are learning and the pace at which they are require to learn.... With disaster situations, this is sometimes very difficult, as safety and recovery are top concerns. Following this process for creating a developmentally appropriate disaster curriculum will help prevent children from being lost in the shuffle during the recovery process." [5]

Developmentally appropriate practice is a term and philosophy that comes from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. DAP centers on the individual child, not on specific lessons or activities. A DAP curriculum must be adaptable, to allow for variations in children's interests, growth, rate and style of learning.

With this understanding, Chiappa began searching for developmentally appropriate activities that would not only help preschool and primary grade children, but would also make life easier for their teachers. The last thing they needed, she sensed, was a set of rigid guidelines. Instead, her goal was to create a ***process***, not lesson plans, that teachers could use to help their students improve their understanding and acceptance of their experience.

Chiappa's first stop was FEMA's "curriculum" notebook, a huge binder filled with a variety of activity worksheets, newspaper clippings and articles on stress management. "It's a how-to book," Chiappa says. "It has some good activities, like coloring book pages you could

actually copy and give to the children. But it doesn't allow for any individual expression or differences in learning style, and the activities were focused on the science of a natural disaster rather than the feelings the children had."

Curriculum ideas came from many places

Chiappa asked the teachers she was observing where they got the activities they were using, but most didn't know. "They just said things like, 'Oh, I saw somebody doing this,' or 'I just thought it up.' No one seemed to know or care where the ideas were coming from, which was a little bit frustrating. But on the good side, no one was trying to take credit, either. They just wanted the children to feel better and learn."

Chiappa supplemented her observations with research conducted in the library and on the Internet (bibliography in Appendix B). She made a list of issues she wanted the curriculum to address, including anger management, stress and fear. She took the activities she read about and observed and tried to make them more flexible, so they would be developmentally appropriate. "Everything I saw was very "cookbook-like," she says. "Like following a recipe. What I wanted was something like watching your grandmother cook, where she throws stuff into a pot until it tastes right." In addition, Chiappa notes, a lot of the published activity material had a 'quick-fix' feeling about it. "I wanted to create something that was more long-term, a curriculum that would answer the question, 'How do we get back on track?'"

Chiappa tried to use materials and activities that would seem familiar to children. "I asked myself: How could children address this issue with things they ordinarily do?" she says. "I wanted to encourage a lot of creativity, which is why I suggested things like Playdough and letting the children draw and paint."

Work with what is familiar, available

Peggy Shaeffer suggests that teachers in disaster areas work with materials they already have and activities they have done in the past with their students. "Ask yourself: How can I work with things that are already familiar to the children in order to help them heal? Don't introduce a lot of new things. Children need their routines, safety, familiarity."

"A lot of crisis situations may make you wish for a 'cure'" she says, "but kids will talk when they're ready. You give them things to do, and just let them know you're available." (A list of 15 developmentally appropriate activities can be found in Appendix A.)

Shaeffer notes that these activities can be used in small groups, or for individual instruction. "This isn't an answer for everyone in every situation," she says about the curriculum. "Rather, it's a guide for you to use from which you can pick and choose with individual children in unique situations."

"We wanted to make sure it was clear to other organizations that faced this kind of situation that the emphasis must be on the ***process***, not a curriculum product," says Glenn Olson.

Parents need educational resources, too

"We tried to offer disaster outreach information to parents," Carol Helland says. "And our library circulation has more than doubled this year. Most of what we offer has anger management, decision-making and communication components.

"Expect that this will be a long process that goes way beyond and way deeper than mere clean-up and construction," she adds. "There needs to be a major focus on rebuilding people. People need support, connections and license to continue to talk about their experiences and struggles."

"It is important to remember that the crisis will be over," Olsen, Shaeffer and Chiappa conclude in their report. "The recovery process will take place.

"Good luck with your recovery, and never give up hope!"[6]

[1] Olsen, G.W., Shaeffer, P. and Chiappa, T. (1998) Where Should We Turn? What Should We Do? Grand Forks: University of North Dakota. Pgs. 11-13.
[2] Ibid. pg. 9.
[3] Ibid. pgs. 16-22.
[4] Ibid. pg. 17.
[5] Ibid. pg. 5.
[6] Ibid. pg. 33.

Project #4: A Puppet Show

"Wanna Play Flood?"

The scene opens with two young children, Shelby and Michael, playing in their backyards.

Shelby:
What is this flood thing, do you know?

Michael:

Something about the river coming out on to the streets and into our houses. It is kinda like when I put too much water into the bathtub and then I lay down in the water and the water spills on the floor, over the edge of the bathtub...that is kinda like a flood. Only it's not the bathtub, it's the river...

"My purpose in writing this puppet show was to support the children's voice," says playwright Sharyl Elshaug-Dorsher. "After the flood, I spent four months at local playgrounds, watching and listening to children play. It took time for the children and their parents to learn to trust and talk to me. But eventually, they did, and every word of this play actually came from the mouths of the children I observed."

Elshaug-Dorsher is a well-known theatre director in Greater Grand Forks. She has spent more than 18 years directing children's shows at the Firehall Theatre, a community performance center, as well as in theatres in surrounding area towns. *The Wind in the Willows, The Velveteen Rabbit, Wiley and the Hairy Man* and *Really Rosie: A Rock Musical*, are just a few of her credits. Her lengthy resume includes touring and summer stock shows throughout Kansas, Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri and Texas, as well.

Besides her experience in theatre, Elshaug-Dorsher has three undergraduate and two graduate degrees, all relating either to the theatre or the psychology of children's communication. She plans to attend the University of California at Berkeley to get her Ph.D. in Theatre Direction.

But, as Elshaug-Dorsher sees it, it wasn't just her professional background or degrees that qualified her to write a puppet show for children who had experienced the flood. It was her love of children and her determination to make their feelings known after the disaster.

"I interviewed children who actually helped their parents carry out debris after the flood," she says. "They knew incredible details, like 'the eyelashes came off my doll,' or 'my sister's poster got wrecked.' Although most parents wanted to protect their children from the mess and the health hazards of clean up, some couldn't afford a babysitter or didn't have family around to watch their children while they worked.

"Interestingly enough, I found that the children who were allowed to go back to their flood-damaged homes were better adjusted than the children who didn't," she continues. "They weren't as angry. The children who were kept away had a sense of abandonment, as though some 'thing' or monster took their stuff, although they knew it wasn't their parents or the city. The children who went back were able to see the damage first-hand and grieve for what they had lost."

The playwright found the children to be honest to a fault. "Children have no sense of secret," she says. "They'll say things like, 'We lost a lot of exercise equipment, but Dad never used it.'" She smiles. "Their mothers would just roll their eyes and shake their heads and laugh."

Ironically, as Elshaug-Dorsher was trying to document the children's feelings, she was trying to come to grips with her own. Her home near downtown Grand Forks sustained heavy damage, and she suffered a loss of almost $67,000 in personal possessions, including more than

210 scripts from shows she had directed. "The play was hard for me to research and write because I was tired of dealing with the flood," she says. "Writing it helped me share some of my own grief, because I had to get rid of some pain that really hurt."

The scene begins with the characters Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and Shelby returning to their home that is now destroyed by floodwaters. They are cleaning out the house and throwing away the damaged belongings that cannot be saved. They know they will not be able to return to this home as it was. They are sad.

Shelby (talking to government representative from FEMA):

Michael is my best friend and he lives next door to me. We were going to build a fort of sandbags to keep the water out, only we didn't have enough time to do it. Now he is gone, and I don't know where he went to. Mister FEMA, do you know where he went?

In the play, Shelby and Michael ultimately lose their homes and most, if not all, of their possessions. But Elshaug-Dorsher insists that the children she met were less concerned with losing their toys, books and clothes than they were with being separated from their friends. "They wanted to be asked about their friends and neighbors, not about their toys," she says. "Their parents, of course, had to be more concerned with getting back their heat and water than in finding their child's best friend. So I started to ask, 'What did you feel like?' not 'What did you lose?'

Elshaug-Dorsher did her research for the play in many different places. She tried to talk to teachers in the most heavily flood-damaged areas, but most were too busy to be interviewed. She had better luck with the public library librarians, who were more forthcoming about the changes they witnessed in the children. One of the most telling comments was that the children

no longer wanted "Story Hour" to be about reading a piece of fiction. Instead, "it became a counseling session," the playwright notes. "The kids just wanted to talk."

One four-year-old was especially memorable. "She was bluntly honest," Elshaug-Dorsher says. "To her, our conversation was business, and she wanted me to know all the details of the business she was up to, which was helping her mom clean out their house. She told me her doll's hair got full of mud, and her mother had always told her to be careful with the doll's hair. So she wondered how come the flood didn't know that, too?"

As the children talked, the playwright wrote. She closely observed more than 40 children in total. "I got in on their level," she says. "You won't find out about children if you ask their parents or read articles on the Internet. I was willing to lay on the ground with them and be totally ridiculous and get dirty. I did things that weren't 'textbook,' and they worked to build the children's trust of me."

Although Elshaug-Dorsher was living her research, she still went through at least six drafts of the play. The drafts were reviewed by a team of experts in early childhood education, including Gayle Nelson, the former director of the University of North Dakota Children's Center; Carrie Brouse, a doctoral student in Early Childhood Education and Laurel Hulteng, a teacher in the Grand Forks Head Start Program. Elshaug-Dorsher said that she and the members of the team did not always agree.

"They kept saying that children wouldn't talk like this, but children today are much more sophisticated than they were a generation ago, thanks to both TV and computers," Elshaug-Dorsher says. "The experts made comments like, 'Have the children call their friends' parents by their first names, not 'Mr. And Mrs. Johnson.' But if I had done that, it wouldn't have been authentic. That IS how the children I observed talked to their friends' parents. Sometimes I feel

that we as adults have forgotten what it is like to be children. In the end, I told them to remember why we were doing this, that it wasn't about names or language, but about the children, and we settled on the script."

Scene: The Johnson family is preparing to evacuate.

Mrs. Johnson is trying to be orderly and cool-headed.

Mrs. Johnson:

There you are Shelby. I have been looking all over for you. You have to listen to me. We have to evacuate and leave our house, and we have to do it now. I have packed your clothes. Do you want to go and see if there is a special toy that you would like to take with you?

Shelby:

Mom, what are all of these noises, and why are we leaving at night? Can't we go tomorrow in the daytime to Grandma's? I'm scared. I don't want to go tonight. I don't like floods, and I don't want to go away.

Mrs. Johnson:

Sweetheart, we do not have a choice in this. The Mayor has said that we have to go. There will be no water to drink and no lights in our house and we could get hurt if we stay. So we are doing as they have told us to do. We have to go.

Shelby:

OK.... (pause) Will the flood take you away from me?

Mrs. Johnson:

No! The flood will never wash you or the love that I have for you away...never, ever, ever! Now we really have to go...come on.

The playwright's ultimate goal, she says, was to capture the true voice of the children she observed and interviewed, so that other children could relate to the script. She made an effort to speak to families with differing income levels and experiences, because "the flood was a great leveler." The play can be used as a guide in other natural disaster situations, whether that be a hurricane, tornado, earthquake, fire or other occurrence.

Although Elshaug-Dorsher began her research within weeks of the disaster, ultimately, "Let's Play Flood" was only performed once in Greater Grand Forks. Because of delays in the approval of the script—"we spent way too much time with small details"—and the playwright's own busy schedule, the play wasn't complete until August, 1998. In addition, she and her colleagues could not secure quality puppets for the budget that been allotted to the project. Because four months of healing and resolution had already taken place, most teachers were reluctant to have their students relive the disaster experience by creating their own puppets and staging the play.

Elshaug-Dorsher advises others who might want to do a puppet activity for children after a natural disaster not to make the same mistake. "Begin your observation process as the disaster is happening, if you can. The important thing with children is immediacy, because they want things fixed ***now***. If the show had been staged earlier, resolution could have come sooner. The children's emotional needs would have ranked on a par with getting a new furnace."

So instead, she and a troupe of her actor friends staged a reading of the script at the Firehall Theatre. Although the audience was small, the response was enthusiastic, and "it led to a lot of talking. The children were really excited."

For those with limited resources, Elshaug-Dorsher suggests using humans as puppets, a la *The Lion King* production on Broadway. "You can do wonderful things with movement, and the

children love it," she says. "You can put the flood on stilts so it can 'rise,' for example." The puppet show can be adapted to the situation and the children. "Think of this script as a raw piece of information, as one view. Then build on it. You can change the children's races and identities, or do creative dramatics with them so they can improvise the action. Try starting with a completely open-ended question like, 'What is a flood?'"

Aim for honesty, no matter what. "Don't sugarcoat things," she insists. "Children want things to be real, and they know the difference. For example, if you have a siren in your town, make sure that a recording of it is your sound effect. Do the action as it actually happened."

She also says that "Let's Play Flood" can be easily adapted for older students. "Change the language," she suggests. "For example, instead of saying 'Are you fooling me?' change it to 'Are you dissin' me?' or whatever the current slang happens to be."

Scene: Several months have passed, and Shelby is heading to her new childcare. Her family now lives in a FEMA trailer and is adjusting to the changes that have happened over the past few months. This is Shelby's first day at school. Much to her delight, she has discovered that her best friend Michael is there, too.

Michael:

Oh Shelby, I am so happy that I have my best friend back. I really missed you a lot. And I got really scared that something bad happened to you.

Shelby:

I thought the same thing happened to you. And I felt bad that we did not get that fort of sandbags built to save us from the flood.

Michael:

So you still want ta be my best friend?

Shelby:

I never ever ever ever stopped...you will always be my best friend no matter how many floods there are.

Despite the personal and professional challenges she faced, Elshaug-Dorsher says she was happy to write the play. "It was a good project for me to do because I got to laugh and cry with people who represent the inner child in me," she says. "And I feel that I fulfilled the goals I had set for the project. First, I wanted to define what the flood was from a child's point-of-view. Second, I wanted to help an audience realize that the experience ultimately was not about material things, but about the heart. Third, I wanted to keep the play short enough to keep a young child's attention and fourth, I wanted them to be reassured that we can be rejoined with friends."

For puppet resources online, check:

The Puppetry Home Page: http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/builders/index.html.

Or Stage Hand Puppets: http://fox.nstn.ca/~puppets/activity.html.

Other puppet shows and plays are available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Summary Conclusions

After one year of persistent, dedicated effort, the goals of the Excellent Beginnings Planning Grant were achieved. The four projects were complete, and much had been learned.

As Sara Hanhan and her child study colleagues noted: "Remember that children respond to natural disasters as they do to all things: variously." Their findings made a strong case for reassuring children that the people they love and care about are safe.

"The children really could have used something to focus on *immediately* after the disaster," suggests disaster counselor Jolaine Knain. The activities in the attached curriculum are a good place to start. However, almost every teacher and administrator interviewed pointed out that adults must take care of themselves as well as the children they care for and serve. Learn to recognize the signs of stress, and treat them seriously.

"Having a mentor in the classroom frees the teacher to work more closely with children with special needs," Glenn Olsen says. "A mentor is one more adult or friend for the child to talk to," Tara Chiappa adds.

"Don't sugarcoat things," playwright Sharyl Elshaug-Dorsher says. "Children want things to be real, and they know the difference."

Finally, "Never give up hope!" curriculum researchers Glenn Olsen, Peggy Shaeffer and Tara Chiappa insist. For no matter how great the disaster or profound the loss, teaching and learning are a key component of the recovery process.

Appendix Of Child- Centered Activities

Note: the following stress tests and child-centered activities are from the report, "Where Do We Turn? What Should We Do?" by Glenn W. Olsen, Ph.D., Peggy Shaeffer, Ph.D. and Tara Chiappa, M.S.

Appendix A

Checking for Stress

Test your stress reaction

Questions	Yes	No
1. I find myself irritated at small things.		
2. I feel overwhelmingly sad at times.		
3. I have a lack of energy.		
4. I feel tense often.		
5. I have trouble sleeping.		
6. I have trouble concentrating on things.		
7. I feel sick often (headache, stomachache, or other).		
8. I can be considered moody.		
9. I don't like telling people how I feel.		
10. I sometimes cried for no reason.		
11. I am angry about what has happened.		
12. I'm anxious about the future.		
13. I feel guilty about what has happened.		
14. I'm having trouble making decisions.		
15. I feel generally overwhelmed.		
16. I find myself drinking/smoking more.		
17. I am having trouble relaxing.		
18. I feel helpless about the situation I am in.		
19. I feel as if I have no one to turn to.		
20. I think I am stressed.		

Give yourself one point for every time you answered yes. If you have five points, chances are you're feeling stress related to your current situation. (Modified from "The Stress Test," an NDSU Extension Service Booklet, 1997)

What to Look For-- Parent Input

Ask the parents of children in your class about what they have observed.

Question	Yes	No
1. Is your child having trouble sleeping?		
2. Is your child waking up during the night?		
3. Is your child wetting the bed?		
4. Does your child complain about feeling ill?		
5. Is your child "extra sensitive" to things?		
6. Is your child fighting with his/her siblings?		
7. Is your child anxious about going to school?		
8. Does your child seem fatigued?		
9. Is your child throwing temper tantrums?		
10. Is your child "clingy"?		
11. Have you noticed changes in your child's behavior?		
12. Have you noticed changes in your child's attitude?		
13. Have you noticed a change in your child's health?		
14. Does your child exhibit nervous behaviors?		
15. Is your child having trouble with schoolwork?		
16. Does your child seem isolated or lonely?		
17. Does your child seem preoccupied with what has happened?		
18. Does your child refuse to discuss the situation?		
19. Does your child feel guilty about what has happened?		
20. Do you feel that your child has been affected by the situation?		

If you checked YES to five or more questions, it is likely that the child is exhibiting some reactions to the situation. Remember that you are looking for ***differences*** in behavior... not behavior that is age-appropriate or was "normal" for that child ***before*** the crisis occurred.

Modified from "How Am I?" an NDSU Extension Service Booklet, 1997

What To Look For-- Questions to Ask Your Kids

Ask the children in your class to answer the following questions

Question	Yes	No
1. I often feel sick or tired.		
2. I don't sleep very well at night.		
3. I think that what has happened may be my fault.		
4. I think that others may feel this is my fault.		
5. There was something I could have done to prevent this.		
6. I am always worrying about school.		
7. I can't relax or have fun.		
8. I feel bored all the time.		
9. I am feeling depressed.		
10. I have been crying more often than usual.		
11. Even though I am crying, I am not sure why.		
12. I wonder if my friends feel the same way I do.		
13. I don't think there is anyone to talk to about how I feel.		
14. I don't feel like talking to anyone about how I feel.		
15. I have been fighting with my friends a lot.		
16. I have been fighting with my parents because of what happened.		
17. I am feeling sad more than usual.		
18. I don't know why I feel sad.		
19. I think that I have been affected by what happened.		

If the child checked YES to five or more questions, it is likely that he/she is exhibiting some reactions to the situation. Remember that you're looking for ***differences*** in behavior... not behavior that is age-appropriate or was "normal" for that child before the crisis occurred.

Modified from "How Am I?" an NDSU Extension Service Booklet, 1994

Appendix B
Child-Centered Activities

Many of the activities used during the recovery of the flood were imaginative and helpful. For the most part, these activities can be altered to fit the situation that you are in. Although many of the following activities may specify a disaster or crisis situation, it is done merely for the purpose of easy explanation. In other words, look at the activity and "insert crisis here" if the disaster around which it is planned is not the one in which you are involved.

Before you look through the activities, remember that they are child-centered. The main goal of each of them is to provide ***developmentally appropriate*** activities for children. Though the following activities may be vague, they leave room for child input, personalization and individual attention.

Activity One

Get out some modeling clay. Just plunk it down on the table and watch what children do with it. Many children will re-create a part of the crisis, or talk to themselves about the crisis while playing. Listen for cues and jump in when appropriate. Don't be afraid to guide them with suggestions, but let them do the majority of the work. If they need to discuss the crisis, it will come up eventually.

Rationale:

This is a stress-free and possibly stress-relieving activity, as it does not require that the disaster be discussed. Leaving the activity open allows the children to reach their own level of comfort and security, encouraging them to talk when they are ready.

Activity Two

Give the children lots of free time to color, draw, and paint. Ask them to paint whatever they want. Encourage them to draw about the situation. Share their pictures in a class museum, discussing what they drew with one another. This will help the children express how they are feeling, and encourage their classmates to do the same. With any luck, the children will talk about their loss, and will feel less isolated knowing that others are feeling the same way.

Rationale:

As with the clay, this activity allows children to express themselves creatively, without demanding that they address the crisis situation. Saving the pictures created, or using them as a memorial, will help promote a creative reminder of the event for a later date.

Activity 3

Tell a story with the children. Ask the children to help come up with an ending to the story. The class can draw a book illustrating the story. You will most likely not have any trouble guiding the children to discuss the disaster situation, as it will be on most of their minds. Let the children decide what things are important enough to put in their class book.

Rationale:

This activity is very child-centered. It allows children to discuss with you and their classmates what is on their minds. Having an illustrated book that is developed as a class or individually will help children work out their feelings on paper. If the children are old enough, they can prepare their own book. Allowing the children to take their work home will allow them to have a positive experience associated with the disaster.

Activity Four

Read a story to the children. There are hundreds of books about different disasters that are age-appropriate for most children. Find one that fits your disaster and tell it to the children. Ask them to relate the story to their own lives and discuss with them the differences between their situation and that in the story. Suggested reading can be found in Appendix C.

Rationale:

Since children often relate stories that they hear to their own lives, reading them a tale about a similar crisis may help them come to terms with their situation. It is emotionally beneficial for children to feel that they are not isolated, especially in a disaster situation. Letting them share their experiences with a fictional character will help them feel less isolated.

Activity Five

If the crisis included a death, encourage the children to talk about the person(s) who have died. Making a class scrapbook or memorial wall may help children deal with their emotions and get some closure. Reminding the children that they should not feel guilty that they survived is important. (Be careful when discussing issues related to the death. Not all families have the same views on religion and what occurs after death. Make sure that you know what your students believe, and encourage them to be open about believing them.)

Rationale:

Since children, like adults, often feel guilty about having survived while others did not, it is important to combat these feelings. Discussing the loss openly will allow children an opportunity to voice these feelings, and will allow professionals the opportunity to deal with

them. Creating a memorial with the children will help them understand that it is okay to remember those who have died, and that their own survival should not be laden with guilt. Most importantly, this activity will allow the children the opportunity to creatively express their feelings about the loss.

Activity Six

Recreate the situation. As with the flood, the children can take part in recreating the situation. Of course, if the crisis was a school shooting or hostile attack, this may not be appropriate. Use your judgment. Recreating natural disasters is a good science activity that can help explain why the situation occurred while helping children come to terms with it. Again, the rebuilding process is just as important.

Rationale:

Children often do not understand why the crisis occurred. With natural disasters, it is important to be honest with the children about the possibilities that the disaster could occur again. Explaining the scientific basis for what has happened may help children feel less vulnerable. If the disaster is likely to happen again (as with earthquakes and after shocks) discuss safety issues with children as well.

Activity Seven

Get the children involved in some of the recovery work. During the flood, the entire community helped sandbag. Children can be messengers, refreshment bringers, or just comic relief to the adults working on rebuilding. If the children feel involved they may come to a better understanding about what has happened, and may feel more secure about it.

Rationale:

Although in some disaster situations it is not appropriate to have children present during the recovery process, it can be very beneficial when it is appropriate. Keeping parents and children working on the same activity helps both feel less isolated at a time where family and loved ones are needed most.

Activity Eight

Puppets are a great way for children to express themselves. If you don't have any available, have the children make them. Encourage the children to create scripts of their own and perform them to the class. Try and guide the children to write about the disaster. The interactions between the puppets will give children to safe place to express their own feelings.

Rationale:

There may be volunteer organizations that are assisting in your recovery process. If this is the case, they may have puppets available, and may even put on the puppet show for your class. Make sure that their script is age-appropriate for your students. If the script is not appropriate, children may walk away from the experience feeling more frustrated and confused than before.

Activity Nine

Make something from nothing. If the disaster created debris or rubble, bring some of it into your classroom. A piece of a broken wall can become a lively paint canvas. The children will have a positive memory to bring home with them, created from something so negative.

Rationale:

Keeping the children creatively involved in a project will allow them the opportunity to express their feelings. Using debris from the disaster will help children feel as if they are doing something "hands-on" toward recovery.

Activity Ten

Ask the children to keep a diary about how they are feeling and what things are going on in their lives. Encourage them to write about their losses, and what they're doing to help get over the loss. Make sure to respond to the children so that they know you are there. Keep your eyes open for any responses that may seem extreme or dangerous. Younger children can dictate their ideas for the teacher, and can illustrate their pages.

Rationale:

It is important to observe for serious reactions to the crisis. If a child can express his/her feelings on paper, a professional can monitor for any concerns. Children will "vent" through their diaries, and with the responses from the teacher, the children will be less likely to experience isolation concerning their feelings.

Activity Eleven

Encourage children to create a manual for another school that may face a similar disaster. Much like this curriculum process, ask children to document things that they feel may help someone else in their situation. Try to get children to discuss what things they have included,

but were not resources available to them. Question them to determine how they respond to those unmet needs.

Rationale:

Doing this will help you know where children are in terms of their recovery and what needs they feel are most important to have met. This activity will also be useful to other communities that may encounter a similar situation. Allowing children to create something that others can use may help them feel less vulnerable as they transform from "victim" to "expert."

Activity Twelve

Get a camera and start taking pictures. Allow the children to have time taking pictures as well. Encourage them to take pictures of the situation (for example, snapshots of ruined buildings). Create a photo album for the class.

Rationale:

During the Red River Valley Flood, wonderful pictures were taken of severely affected areas. These photographs are now displayed in museums and books that discuss the flood. Looking back at the ruins through these photographs is a wonderful way to remember how far the community has come.

Activity Thirteen

Do a show and tell activity using items from the disaster. Encourage children to bring in toys or memorabilia from the situation.

Rationale:

When a child brings in a broken toy or flood-ravaged doll, other children will know that they are not alone in losing items that were important to them. The show and tell item will be

displayed, letting the child share the importance of that item one last time before it is thrown away. The child, in a sense, has the opportunity to "say goodbye" to the item.

Activity Fourteen

Create a collage from magazine or newspaper clippings about the event. Children will enjoy the cut-and-paste activity, and the discussion around the table should naturally shift toward the collage topic.

Rationale:

Children will discuss the event with one another as they cut and paste pictures onto their collage. They will recognize scenes in the pictures from around their neighborhood, helping them come to terms with what buildings or items remain in their community, and which ones were lost in the disaster.

Activity Fifteen

Discuss with the children what their exact experience was. Ask them to describe what they heard, smelled, saw, etc. Encourage the children to attribute feelings to their experiences.

Rationale:

Children will begin to discuss what sounds, smells, and sights are frightful to them now that the disaster is over. Teachers can use this knowledge to help focus their activities towards dealing with those fears. Children will also begin to find commonalities in the experiences, making them feel less isolated. Teachers can also lead a discussion about feelings, expressing to the children that it is natural to feel angry, scared, or guilty.

Appendix C
Who to turn to for extra help

Resources and book list

Resources

Because each crisis and disaster is so unique in nature, it is difficult to offer a resource list. It is impossible to list outreach programs in every city around the nation, but here are some suggestions on who we call for extra help. This may mean that you have to do a little late work on your own to track down services. Don't worry though, in the wake of any crisis, angels from everywhere will come and offer you their help. Don't let this resource list take their place, let it supplement their suggestions.

Check online resources:

Browse web pages online to find descriptions of similar occurrences. Usually these web sites will have some ideas on what worked for them in their hour of need. Try to find newspaper articles online about your situation. Often volunteers offer to help, and to be contacted via a phone number that has been printed into a newspaper.

Talk to a librarian:

There are many books and videos available on different disasters. The librarian can help you find books relating to your crisis that our age appropriate for your students. Don't give up, the books are out there!

Call Someone:

By this point, many organizations aiding in disaster relief are probably there to aid you. If you don't know how to get the services you need, call them and ask. They can usually point you in the right direction. If all else fails, call town hall, your member of Congress, the local police, or fire station. Those resources are there, but they are sometimes just hard to find.

Go to Church/Synagogue/Mosque for disaster help (even if you are not religious!!!)

Often, these places are the cornerstone of the recovery movement. Organizations that offer their services will frequently set up in a local church and run their efforts from there. Usually someone can provide you with more information on getting the services you need.

Red Cross United Way:

These programs are probably already involved with your situation... that's what they are there for! Call the local number and ask if there are any special services offered pertaining to your situation. Be persistent. If they don't know, get a national number to call and see if they can assist you.

Book List

Floods and storms

Ben's Dream by C. Van Allsburg, published by Houghton Mifflin

Drip, Drop by D. Carrick, published by Picture Book Studio

Mushroom and in the Rain by M. Ginsburg, published by McMillan

The Storm Book by P.Pier, published by Doubleday

The Flood That Came to Grandma's House by L. Stallone, published by Upshur

Water by C.S. Ventrell and J.M. Parramon, published by Woodbury

Anger and Fear

The Hating Book by C. Zolotow

I Was So Mad by Norma Simon

Sometimes I'm Afraid by The Menninger Clinic

Grief and Loss (Death)

The Tenth Good Thing about Barney by Judith Viorst

The Fall of Freddy the Leaf by Leo Buscaglia

Everett Anderson's Goodbye by Lucille Clifton

All Disasters

About Disasters by J. Berry, published by Children's Press

I Know What To Do (A Kid's Guide to Natural Disasters) by Bonnie Mark, Ph.D. and Aviva Layton

Earthquakes

Earthquake by Matt Christopher

Teacher Resources

Children in Conflict by Morris Francis, published by Basic Books, Inc.

Child Stress: Understanding and Answering Stress Signals of Infants, Children and Teenagers by M.S. Miller, published by Doubleday

Helping Children Cope with Grief by Alan Wolfelt

For the complete text of the report, "Where Do We Turn? What Should We Do?" contact the University of North Dakota College of Education and Human Development, P.O. Box 7189, Grand Forks, ND 58202

Appendix D: A Puppet Show for Children

Wanna Play Flood?

By, Sharyl Elshaug-Dorsher

Cast of characters:

Shelby Johnson

Michael Thompson

Mr. Bill Johnson

Ms. Jane Johnson

Grandmother Johnson

Mr. Tom Thompson

Ms. Alice Thompson

FEMA Brad

Ms. Sally Silverstone

The action takes place just before a large flood occurs in the city in which Shelby and Michael live. They are very close friends and they are very young.

The place can be anywhere a flood could take place.

The time is late winter to summer. This could be modified if need be for performance purposes.

****

Scene one

(The play begins with a game of Catch the Ball between the characters of MICHAEL and SHELBY. Michael is four years old and Shelby is four years old. They live next

door to each other and are best friends. There is a sound effect of children playing as the scene begins. SHELBY enters first.)

SHELBY:

(Laughing and throwing a ball.) There! Now I will throw to you. Can you catch it? (Michael enters laughing and they sit for a moment.)

MICHAEL:

Okay, I will catch it. (Laughing) You're best ball thrower, Shelby. (More laughter)

SHELBY:

So now what do you want to do? How about if we climb a tree?

MICHAEL:

No...I am not so good at climbing trees. I sure like playing. (He pauses and thinks for a moment.) So…ya know what? I have a secret! (Turning away from Shelby.)

SHELBY:

What is it?

MICHAEL:

Not telling.

SHELBY:

You have to tell me. We tell each other everything.

MICHAEL:

If I tell you, then it won't be a secret.

SHELBY:

Okay! But I would tell you if I had a secret, right?

MICHAEL:

Right.

SHELBY:

So I think that you should tell me.

MICHAEL:

Okay….My secret is... (building dramatically) that...you...are...my best friend. There! I said it.

SHELBY:

You're my best friend, too. That's a nice secret…But why does it have to be a secret?

MICHAEL:

Well, now that I told you, it isn't a secret anymore. (Laughter) We're going to stay together forever. You are the bestest friend in the entire world!

SHELBY:
So, what you want to play now?

MICHAEL:

I don't know. What do you want to do?

SHELBY:

I don't know. What do you want to do? Wanna go to the park and swing?

MICHAEL:

No. I can't go.

SHELBY:

Me neither.

MICHAEL:

I have to stay close to home and not go out of the yard, because Mom wants to know where I am all the time.

SHELBY:

My mom said that, too. She said on account of the rising water. It's a flood, she said. (Thinking) What is this flood thing? Do you know?

MICHAEL:

Something about the river coming out onto the streets and into our houses. It is kinda like when I put too much water into the bathtub and then I lay down in the water and the water spills on the floor, over the edge of the bathtub. That is kinda like a flood. Only it's not the bathtub...it's the river.

SHELBY:

My mom says do I have to stay near the house because we might have to (overly pronounced) e-vac-u-ate.

MICHAEL:

What is vaccinate?

SHELBY:

No, not vaccinate; evac-ua-ate, she said. It means to leave your house. My dad said that if the water in the river does not stop going up and up it might come into our house. And then we would have to e-vac-u-ate.

MICHAEL:

Where you going to? On vacation? Ya know, like last year when we all went and camped out. That was neat! Are you going to do that?

SHELBY:

No. Nothing like that. My mom said that when they tell us that we have to go, then we have to go.

MICHAEL:

Do you think that I would get to go, too?

SHELBY:

I bet you would, 'cuz you live next door to us. You better ask your mom.

MICHAEL:

She isn't home. The baby sitter is there. Mom and Dad are out sandbagging. They are either sandbagging or walking on a dike. I know what sandbagging is. That's where you put sand in a bag and then they put it by the river to keep the water from coming through it. Kinda like our fort that we built last year, 'member?

SHELBY:

That sounds like a good thing, Michael. If we build a fort of sandbags all around our house then the water won't get in, right?

MICHAEL:

I think so. (Getting the idea) What if we make a fort!

SHELBY:

What?

MICHAEL:

Sure! If Mom and Dad are making sandbags, then we should, too! A fort around our house. What do you think?

SHELBY:

Why?

MICHAEL:

Then the water won't come to our house and you won't have to go away from me, and can be my best friend all of the time.

SHELBY:

Michael, you will always be my best friend. All the time.

MICHAEL:

Promise?

SHELBY:

Promise!

MICHAEL:

And you will be mine, too. We aren't afraid of that river...are we?

SHELBY:

Nope. Wanna make a fort?

MICHAEL:

Sure! What are we going to make it out of? The fort?

SHELBY:

I don't know. We better think about it. It has to be real strong to keep out the river. Hey Michael, wanna race you to the top of that hill! (She exits.)

MICHAEL:

(Laughing and racing off with her.) Hey! Wait for me... (He exits off)

END SCENE ONE

****

Scene Two

(SHELBY and MICHAEL'S PARENTS are seen rushing across the set carrying belongings. They are quite frantic. There are loud sirens and noises that are unexplainable at the beginning of the scene. There is much chaos and confusion, and there is little explanation to the lead characters SHELBY and MICHAEL.)

MICHAEL:

Shelby, do you know what that noise is? It's so loud, it hurts my ears, and I'm scared.

SHELBY:

I don't know for sure what it is. My mom and dad said that it means that the river is spilling over and we are going to get wet if we don't leave soon.

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MICHAEL:

Why is everyone rushing around?

(In the background, the parents are making noise. They are preparing to leave the home and find shelter. They are very frantic, frightened and yet aware of taking care of the business that needs to be done.)

SHELBY:

We are trying to save our couch and television from getting wrecked. My dad said that the computer would have to go in the car with us. And that I could not bring all of my Beanie Babies with me. I don't know what's going on. I think the flood is here.

MICHAEL:

The flood...But didn't they build a good fort for us that would keep the water out?

SHELBY:

I think that the fort broke. And now we have to go away.

MICHAEL:

Where are you going?

SHELBY:

I think we're going to my grandma's, but I don't know where for sure.

(Enter MR. THOMPSON, MICHAEL'S father. He is a kind, considerate man who is very compassionate. Michael is an only child. The father is in a rush to get his family to safety. Michael's mother, JANE THOMPSON, enters with him. She is frantic and very much in a panic and concerned that something is going to be left behind.)

MR. THOMPSON:

There you are. Michael, we gotta get going now. The National Guard just came through and said that none of us can stay here in our homes. We have to leave. Is there anything that you want to take with you to Grandma's?

MICHAEL:

I wanna bring my cars for sure, and then my truck, and how about my Hot Wheels?

MRS. THOMPSON:

I need the baby books, Dear. I have to go back for the baby books. I won't leave the house without them. I just can't leave them.

MR. THOMPSON:

Quickly, Dear. The Guard wants us out and they're telling us that the water is rising. We have to go.

MRS. THOMPSON:

I know. I will only take a minute. What if we put more furniture on the second floor? How about that? We have to try, Bill. We just have to try to save more.

MR. THOMPSON:

There just isn't any more time, Dear. We have to go. You have to leave it. You have to leave it.

MRS. THOMPSON:

I know. I know. (Crying. She exits.)

SHELBY:

Why is your mom crying? Something seems to be bothering her.

MICHAEL:

She doesn't cry much unless she is really sad or happy. I think that she is sad today.

MR. THOMPSON:

Michael, you have to say goodbye now. You have to go and get what you want to save and bring it with us. Go ahead now, and get it, so that we can get in the car and go. (MR. THOMPSON exits and takes MICHAEL with him.)

MICHAEL:

(Exits) Bye, Shelby! I'll see you later. Remember: you are my best friend forever.

SHELBY:

Bye! See ya tomorrow. (MICHAEL is already off) Maybe?

(Enter MRS. JOHNSON, SHELBY'S mother. She is a sweet and calm woman, but very orderly about the fashion in how she is leaving. Very diligent about evacuation and rather cool-headed about the way she deals with SHELBY.)

MRS. JOHNSON:

There you are, Shelby. I have been looking all over for you. You have to listen to me. We have to evacuate and leave our house, and we have to do it now. I have packed your clothes. Do you want to go and see if there's a special toy you would like to take with you?

SHELBY:

Mom, what are all of these noises, and why are we leaving at night? Can't we go tomorrow in the daytime to Grandma's? I'm scared. I don't want to go tonight! I don't like floods, and I don't want to go away.

MRS. JOHNSON:

Sweetheart, we do not have a choice in this. The mayor has said that we have to go. She said there will be no water to drink and no lights in our house, and that we could get hurt if we stay. So we are doing as they have told us to do. We have to go.

SHELBY:

Okay.... (Pause)...Will the flood take you away from me?

MRS. JOHNSON:

No! The flood will never wash you or the love that I have for you away. Never, ever, ever! Now we really have to go. Come on.

(Sirens are louder and stronger. The noises of trucks and machinery are heard in the distance. We hear a car start and drive away. Then we hear nothing but the sound of water. The flood has arrived in the city.)

END SCENE TWO

****

Scene Three

(The scene opens at SHELBY'S GRANDMOTHER'S house. It is a nice place, and SHELBY loves her GRANDMOTHER very much. They are kind, generous and compassionate to each other, although this is not like a usual visit for them. There is some disagreement as the scene opens as to where their friends are during this evacuation.)

MRS. JOHNSON:

Mother, it's just frightening to not know where our friends are. They said that they were going to go to her mother's home, and now they're not there. That's all. I'm just worried Mother, about our friends. That's all.

GRANDMOTHER JOHNSON:

Don't worry so, Dear. I am sure that they will get in touch. They're probably having a nice piece of pie right now, and enjoying their visit with their family. I always say that no news is good news at times like this. Relax, Dear. There's nothing you can do at this time, so quit worrying about it.

MRS. JOHNSON:

Mother, this isn't exactly a visit. Our home is being flooded. And I have every reason to WORRY. Right now everything that we own is being destroyed by the flood. Everything. It is upsetting not to know where people are, or when we can go back to our home and what is really going on. Why don't they tell us something?

GRANDMOTHER JOHNSON:

Oh dear, I can see how frightened you are. We are all going to have to trust the mayor and the community that they are looking out for us and doing the best for all of us during this time. I am sorry that I do not have the answers.

SHELBY:

(Has been hearing this entire conversation.) Mom, you know where Michael went to? I am worried, too.

MRS. JOHNSON:

Oh, Shelby, have you been here the whole time?

SHELBY:

(Nods her head yes.) Yes.

MRS. JOHNSON:

I am sorry that I got so upset, and I have made you worried, too. I am worried about all of this. And your friend Michael, well, Michael is very very safe with his family. Everything is going to be all right. Just you see, everything is going to be okay. We're going to get through this together.

SHELBY:

So did the water go into our house, Mama?

MRS. JOHNSON:

(Composing herself before she speaks) I think so. I saw pictures of where we live on television, and it looks like it went way over the roof. All that I can see is the chimney of the house. It scares me too, Shelby.

SHELBY:

So then my Beanie Babies got wet?

MRS. JOHNSON:

Yes, they probably did Sweetie. But I promise you, there are more Beanie Babies at the store. We will be okay. But do you want to know who is the best Beanie Baby of all?

SHELBY:

Who?

MRS. JOHNSON:

I've got the best Beanie Baby of them all. I got you! What do you think of that?

SHELBY:

(Giggling. Her mood has changed) You're silly, Mama.

MRS. JOHNSON:

It's good to be silly. I think that we need to laugh a whole lot more around here.

MR. JOHNSON:

(Entering, upset and worried) They said...tomorrow we can go back!!

MRS. JOHNSON:

What?

MR. JOHNSON:

Tomorrow, we can go back home...or to what is left of our home...

MRS. JOHNSON:

Did they say that it was safe?

MR. JOHNSON:

They said we could come back tomorrow. That is all that they said. (He exits worried)

GRANDMOTHER JOHNSON:

Well, I sure hope I get to have you for a little while longer!

MRS. JOHNSON:

I think we will be here for awhile, Mother. I think we will be here longer than you think.

SHELBY:

So tomorrow we get to go home. Yeah!! Yippie!!!!! (Jumping up and down with excitement) Yeah, tomorrow I get to go home! Yeah!!!!....etc.

MRS. JOHNSON:

We will see, Shelby, about tomorrow. Let's wait until your father tells us that it's time. (Mother is exiting.)

SHELBY:

Mama?

MRS. JOHNSON:

Yes?

SHELBY:

I love you Mama. No matter what. I love you.

GRANDMOTHER JOHNSON:

Come on Shelby. Why don't we read that book again that you like so much?

SHELBY:

Okay, Grandma. Grandma? Are you afraid of floods?

GRANDMOTHER JOHNSON:

As long as I have my family, I am not afraid of anything. It will be just fine, Shelby. Just you see, it will be just fine. (Exiting GRANDMOTHER and SHELBY.)

END SCENE THREE

****

Scene Four

(The scene begins with the characters MR. & MRS. JOHNSON and SHELBY returning to their home that is now destroyed by the flood waters. They are cleaning out the house and throwing away the damaged belongings that cannot be saved. They know that they will not able to return to this home as it was. They are sad. A new character is introduced: BRAD, the FEMA man enters, and is estimating the damaged area. Brad is about 35 years of age, African American. He is quite knowledgeable about floods and has been through many disasters.)

BRAD:

To start, I'm going to have to look through your house and write down the damage that has happened to your home. I am here to check the damage that has occurred because of the flood. You have to throw away everything that has been contaminated with floodwater. It is not safe

for you to keep or touch anything that was in floodwater. It's for your own safety than I'm saying this.

MR. JOHNSON:

I understand. And where do we go? What are we supposed to do now?

BRAD:

Well, let's talk about some of those options that we have available to you as we walk through your home. You lead the way, Mr. Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON:

Right this way. (They exit)

SHELBY:

(She enters talking to her mother, MRS. JOHNSON.) Mama, Daddy looks so sad talking to the FEMA man. What's wrong? Why is he sad?

MRS. JOHNSON:

He's telling your father that we cannot live here anymore, Shelby. And that we are supposed to leave everything here and that we need to start over.

SHELBY:

But Mom, this is where we live! I don't want to live anywhere else. This is our house.

MRS. JOHNSON:

Brad wants us to live where it is going to be safer for us. He says that since the water has come through our house, it will come again next time it floods. We can't live here and take the chance of getting hurt again.

SHELBY:

What about Michael?

MRS. JOHNSON:

What you mean, Dear? Michael will have to move, too. His home has been destroyed, too.

SHELBY:

Where are they? There is yellow tape all around their house and a car upside down in the yard.

MRS. JOHNSON:

Michael's family has relocated. I don't know where they moved to. But we will find out, Shelby. I promise you that. It might take a little while, but we will find out.

SHELBY:

Okay, Mama.

MRS. JOHNSON:

We can do this, but we all have to work together and stick together as a family. Okay? I'm going to need your help more than ever now. Are you with me?

SHELBY:

Yep...I will help.

MRS. JOHNSON:

Good! I just knew that I could count on you. Now, let's get to work and find you some new Beanie Babies. How about that?

SHELBY:

Wow! Really, that would be the best.

MRS. JOHNSON:

(Calling to her husband, MR. JOHNSON) We're heading to the store, Dear. The Beanie Babies need to be replaced first.

MR. JOHNSON:

(Enters with Brad) I think that is a great idea.

BRAD:

So, what is your name?

SHELBY:

Shelby Johnson.

BRAD:

How old are you?

SHELBY:

Four.

BRAD:

Do you know what my name is?

SHELBY:

My mom said that you were the FEMA guy.

BRAD:

That's right. My name is Brad, and I work for FEMA.

SHELBY:

What is FEMA?

BRAD:

FEMA is the government. We are the same people who make roads and schools and parks. And we have all come here to help everyone who has had a loss because of the flood. Do you understand?

SHELBY:

Kinda like friends of the President?

BRAD:

Yeah, kinda like friends to the President. And there are lots of lots of us who are here to help everyone who was in the flood.

SHELBY:

Like Michael?

BRAD:

Who is Michael?

SHELBY:

Michael is my best friend, and he lives next door to me. We were going to build a fort of sandbags to keep the water out, only we didn't have enough time to do it. Now he is gone, and I don't know where he went to. Mr. FEMA, do you know where he went?

MRS. JOHNSON:

(Interrupting the conversation between SHELBY and BRAD) The Thompsons were our next door neighbors, and they a son Shelby's age. His name is Michael, and they played together a lot. Do you happen to know where the Thompsons are?

BRAD:

The people next door? (Getting the idea.) Actually, I saw them just yesterday, and they are staying with relatives, to the best of my knowledge, until they find a new place to live. But that is all that I know. You might want to check with the city to see if there's any information that they might have on their whereabouts. But that is all that I know. Shelby, I wouldn't worry. Best friends are not that far away from each other.

SHELBY:

Thanks, FEMA man. If you see Michael, will ya tell him I miss him?

BRAD:

You bet. Take care of those Beanie Babies now.

SHELBY:

I will. Bye.

BRAD:

(Exiting) Bye.

MR & MRS. JOHNSON:

Thank you for your help. We will be calling you with the information that you wanted. Thank you.

SHELBY:

He said that he would tell Michael that I missed him.

MRS. JOHNSON:

(exiting with Shelby) I am sure that he will. I am sure that he will.

(MR. JOHNSON stands alone, looks in the direction of the house, and sighs. He leaves. He is sad but knows that things are going to have to change.)

END SCENE FOUR

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Scene five

FINALE

(Several months have passed, and SHELBY is heading to her new day-care. The JOHNSONS are now in a FEMA trailer, and they are adjusting to the changes that have happened over the past few months. A new character, MISS SILVERSTONE, is introduced. She is teaching at the day care provider. This is SHELBY'S first day at the school.)

MRS. JOHNSON:

(Entering with Shelby) Shelby, you just wait and see. There are going to be a lot of new boys and girls here that are just waiting to be your friend. They are all new here, too, so you won't be the only one.

SHELBY:

I don't want to go. I just don't. It's not the same as before, and I miss my friend Michael.

MRS. JOHNSON:

You'll meet some new kids today. I just know that you're going to be so happy. Just give it a few days Shelby...just a few days. Okay?

SHELBY:

Okay. I will try.

MRS. JOHNSON:

That's all that you can do...just try. I love you Shelby. I am proud of you.

SHELBY:

Okay, Mom. I'm proud of you, too.

MRS. JOHNSON:

We're going to get through these changes, Shelby. One step at a time, and it starts with hello. That is all you have to do: just say hello.

MISS SILVERSTONE:

Hello. You must be Shelby.

SHELBY:

Hello.

MISS SILVERSTONE:

Well, I am your new teacher. Come in. We were just about to play some games and read some stories. Would you like that?

SHELBY:

Yes, I would.

MISS SILVERSTONE:

Well, there are lots of new kids here at the daycare since the flood, and everyone is working really hard to make new friends. I just know that you will, too.

SHELBY:

I already have a best friend.

MISS SILVERSTONE:

Well, you can never have enough best friends, and there are lots of kids here that are waiting to meet you. (Exiting MRS. JOHNSON) Bye, Mrs. Johnson, we will see you at noon. Have a nice day.

MRS. JOHNSON:

Bye, Shelby. Have a good day.

SHELBY:

Bye.

MISS SILVERSTONE:

The other children have gone outside for recess already, so let's go outside and see if you can have some fun with the children who were there. I will be right over here if you need me for anything. (She exits)

SHELBY:

(talking to herself) I don't like it here. I don't like it here... (bumping into another kid, who is MICHAEL)

MICHAEL:

I don't like it here...I don't like it here.

(BUMP!!!)

MICHAEL:

Hey, why don't you watch where you're going...?

SHELBY:

You bumped into me...

MICHAEL:

Shelby!!!

SHELBY:

Michael!!!

SHELBY and MICHAEL:

(Chaos at the same time) I missed you so much. Where have you been? (Excitement, happiness, and hugging) I'm so glad you are all right. I really, really missed you.

SHELBY:

I thought that the flood took you away from me...are you okay?

MICHAEL:

When our house got wrecked we got one of them FEMA trailers to live in, and it is neat.

SHELBY:

We are in one of those trailers, too. Maybe we are close to each other. Let's ask our moms, okay?

MICHAEL:

Oh Shelby, I am so happy that I have my best friend back. I really missed you a lot. And I got really scared that something bad happened to you.

SHELBY:

I thought the same thing happened to you. And I felt bad that we did not get that fort of sandbags built to save us from the flood.

MICHAEL:

So you still want to be my best friend?

SHELBY:

I never, ever, ever, ever stopped. You will always be my best friend, no matter how many floods there are. (They hug)

MICHAEL:

Shelby, wanna play flood?

SHELBY:

What?

MICHAEL:

Everybody does it here. Ya see, we pretend we got a car and then we take all of our pretend stuff and put it in the pretend car and then we go to Grandma's and then when the flood is done we come back and get new stuff. Kinda like that.

SHELBY:

Michael, as long as you will be my friend.

MICHAEL:

You betcha! Come on, let's go.

END OF PLAY

Appendix E: A Child Study

"Wen the flood km we had to lv"

Written by,
Dr. Sara Hanhan, University of North Dakota
Dr. Roberta Shreve, Moorhead State University
Dr. Karen Danbom, Moorhead State University

In April 1997, the Red River of the North flooded its banks, spreading across the very flat valley in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota that bears its name. The entire populations of the cities of Grand Forks, North Dakota and East Grand Forks, Minnesota were evacuated. More than 50,000 people left their homes and could not return to clean up and try to re-settle their lives for a month. Children were, of course, part of the evacuation. They had heard for weeks about the citizens' efforts to keep the river at bay with sandbags; they left with their families, with little warning and few belongings, and found other places to stay -- at the Grand Forks Air Force Base, at relatives' houses, in hotels, or in homes of strangers who opened their arms to the fleeing families. Some lived in their family tents or camping vehicles parked in campgrounds. Families fled to 48 of the 50 states. Some of the children finished their school years in the schools of the towns to which they evacuated, and when they returned to the Grand Forks community, most found their homes at least partially filled with muddy water. Those who lived in apartments above the first floor may not have had flooded homes, but were without electricity and safe running water. Others found their homes so damaged that they were unable to return to them, leaving their families with problems of finding new housing, negotiating home buyouts, and what seemed like chronic flood-related work. Some moved into temporary mobile units provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The children also were

witnesses, at least in a tangential way, to the outpouring of help -- of money, food, clothing and of volunteers that also flooded the communities after the water returned to its banks. People worried about each other; and they worried about the children. What would be the effect of such a disaster on the community's children? How could schools help? How would schools be re-built? How could school be held next year in those buildings that were so damaged by the floodwater? A number of agencies were mobilized to assist families and professionals work through the children's flood experiences and feelings.

Many things that were to happen in April or May were put on hold or canceled as the community concentrated on recovery. One of these was the postponement by the College of Education and Human Development at the University of North Dakota of the writing of a planning grant proposal for the Plan for Social Excellence. But with encouragement from the Plan's director, the dean, Dr. Mary Harris, wrote a proposal anyway which now had an added focus on children and schools and the flood. There were plans to develop curriculum that dealt with disasters, especially floods, and a plan for studying the work of children to try to gain some perspective on children's thinking about their flood experiences. The grant was called Excellent Beginnings and is funding this study, as well as others. This report describes what we learned from our study of children's work.

Three of us worked together to describe the work of three children. To get us started, we spent sometime reflecting on the word *flood*. The purpose of our reflection was to broaden our own previously held ideas of flood (Carini, 1986). Although we all live in the Red River Valley, only one of us lives in Grand Forks and experienced the evacuation and flooding of her home, but we all witnessed the pre-flood and post-flood activity that occurred surrounding the disaster. When we reflected, we found images of generally unpleasant and moving water. The water was

described as muddy, dirty, smelly, wet and cold; it was rising, seeping, moving. It was also unstoppable and uncontainable. Once the boundaries of containment had broken, it spread out, an amount of water that was seen as surprising and shocking. It reminded us of such phrases as "flood of emotions," "a flood of tears," "a flood of student papers to read." All of these things seem to have a massiveness, a suddenness of broken boundaries and an unstoppability to them. Descriptions of the event and activity of flooding were both suspended and sudden in time; there was waiting and watching, a slow-motion nature to a disaster, and yet it also felt sudden and overwhelming. Although there were many unpleasant and even dangerous elements associated with the event of a flood (such as disease), there was also feeling of being cradled in the arms of family and connected in new ways with the community. There were many images and sounds associated with flood; amongst them were the sound of pumps, the sounds of helicopters and sirens, and endless radio and television reports. There were floodgates, dikes, levees, sandbags, humvees, Red Cross meals and clothes, canned peas, sandbaggers, and, from the Grand Forks flood, smoke and a burning downtown. Strong emotions associated with floods included fear, worry, sadness, helplessness, numbness, anxiety, disgust, and in general of feeling of being overwhelmed. We all had childhood memories of some kind of flooding: of farm fields in Iowa, of the Platte River in Colorado, and of harboring victims of an earlier, but smaller flood of the Red River. There were thoughts of leaving and of rescue that included taking things with us, a sense of not knowing the future, of wanting to escape, of the importance of re-finding family and friends, of being connected and disconnected all the same time.

Methodology

These were, however, our own thoughts, and we were after an understanding of what *children* might be thinking. Because we had previously studied the work of individual children

across time as a way of understanding the individual child's style and perspective, we wanted to look closely at and describe collectively and carefully the work of the small number of young children (the focus of the grant activity was on early childhood education). We asked professionals who were associated with the public school and preschool programs and who knew of our grant activities to identify young children who might have collections of drawings and/or writings across some period of time. We hoped to find three children whose parents would be willing and able to provide us with collections of their children's work. We also hoped, given the initial response from professionals, to look at the work of one preschooler, one kindergartener, and one child in a primary grade. In the end, two children were referred to us, a preschooler and a kindergartener. We sought out the work of a third child, whose parent we knew to regularly collect his work. This gave us collections of work from one four-year-old girl, one five-year-old girl and one eight-year-old boy. We assigned these children the pseudonyms "Heidi," "Janey," and "Sam." Because our work occurred approximately one year after the flood, the children would have been one year younger at the actual time of the flooding. One first grade teacher also gave us a collection of combined writing and drawing about flood memories her students had done with her prompting. All of the parents were very cooperative and very willing to share their children's work. The collections varied greatly in size, from seven in the collection of the four-year-old to 198 in the collection of the eight-year-old. As a way of providing still another context for our study, we also visited a museum which was displaying the work of children (kindergarten through eighth grade) focusing on the flood, and were given a collection of child writings and drawings from another upstream flooded city completed during activities in a disaster outreach program that served children in the second through fourth grade.

We started, however, with the job of describing the collected work of the three individual children, using the collections of groups of children primarily for checking our perceptions, and for identifying new and/or contrasting themes that weren't present in what we were able to see in the work of the three children.

The following procedures illustrate our methods of description, which draw heavily on processes originally developed at the Prospect School and Center for Educational Research (Carini, 1986). We first looked at each child's whole collection as it had been given to us. To the degree that we knew the dates of the pieces we had, we ordered them chronologically and laid them out so that we could see as much of the collection as possible at the same time. Each of us studied the collection with an eye to finding patterns in the work, and we noted these individually as we saw them. The three of us then took turns, in a round robin fashion, each time sharing one of the patterns we had noted. We did this until we had exhausted our thoughts or beginning impressions about the collection. We noted, for instance, most commonly used media, the degree to which the artist presented details, commonly used colors and shapes, etc. We also noted the content of the pictures, identifying both larger themes (people, water, home) and motifs (sharks, hair) which seemed to be present in the pictures.

After we had gathered our first impressions of a child's collection, we chose one or two pictures to describe in detail. For this study, we purposefully chose one picture which was clearly related to the flood in content or which had been identified as having been drawn at a time close to the flood. The second piece we described from Heidi's collection was chosen because it was in a variety of ways representative of a large number of pieces in the collection. In Janey's case, there was only a small number of pictures to choose from, and only four were free-hand drawings; of the three free-hand drawings remaining, we chose the one which

contrasted most dramatically with the "flood picture" but which was colorful, like her remaining work. We had many choices when we studied Sam's work, and we were able to describe three flood-related pictures as well as a small series within the collection and another picture typical of much of his work. In Heidi's case, we paused to do a reflection on the word *discrete* (as we had done with the word *flood*), because it, and words similar to it, continued to come up in our descriptions of her work. After doing this kind of descriptive work with each child's collection, we also shared our impressions of the child as a drawer and some degree as a thinker. Although the strongest patterns were clearly within the work of each child him or herself (especially Sam and Heidi from whom we had larger collections), we also began to see some patterns in the work drawn during the flood or proximate to it. We saw both continuity and contrast within each child's collection as well as continuity and contrast across the three collections. We noted content and style similarities and differences, and began to make our own collective, tentative sense out of what we were seeing. Finally, we studied the collected writings (many supplemented with drawings) of a class of first graders. We treated these in a similar manner, first gathering beginning impressions of the collection as a whole, then choosing a few pieces to describe great detail. We also took time to paraphrase each of the stories to make sure we were reading them in a mutually understandable way. We then wove what we learned from this reading into our understandings gleaned from the drawings. Finally, we did a cursory study of the collection from the outreach program and a collection of work exhibited in a local museum. These two collections were done on the subject of the flood and consisted of work by children of much more varied ages.

It is important to remember that this method of study is not meant to lead us to the correct interpretation or understanding of children's thinking about floods, or even of these three

children's understanding of flood (Franklin and Thompson, 1994). However, because of its close attention to detail in the expressive work of the children, it does enable us to see some of the thinking each child brings to each piece of work individually as well as to the continuity of personal perspective made visible when a child's larger collection is studied. Key to the process is a respect for each child as the thinker and a belief that each of us is at least partially knowable through our work. Also important is a collective examination of and attention to emerging rich description rather than explanation or judgment. These qualities leave room for other interpretations of what is visible within the work. What follows is a description of the understanding that we developed together from our many hours and weeks of being together with each other and the work of the children. The meanings that we have drawn from the work are no doubt not exactly the meanings the children put into them, nor are they the meanings any one of us would have imparted to the work on our own. The understandings we have developed reside somewhere between the work and us, but they are not ungrounded.

Descriptions of children's collections

Janey

Janey at the time of the study was a four-year-old attending a local preschool program. Her family was evacuated during the flood, and she was living in a FEMA trailer with her parents and nine siblings. Her collection of work is small, consisting of only seven pictures that were produced during the past year while she was in preschool. Janey's pictures are all very different. She uses a variety of media, including crayons, marker, and collage. There are no consistent themes discernable in this small collection of pictures. Two of her seven pictures contain depictions of people, one of which was a drawing of her rather extensive family.

Our general impression of her collection is that Janey uses some variation in perspective in her work, showing views from slightly below the baseline to views from above, including much of the sky. We also note to slight slant to her drawings, often to the left. She fills the page when she works, using all of the space available to her. The strokes in the drawings at first glance appear to be hurried, but upon closer study we note that there is very little overlap of lines, a suggestion that she has used great care in completing the work. Three of her pictures are made up of outlines only; one and a part of another consist of strong outlines that are filled in, very much like a coloring page, and the other two are a collage of torn paper and a paint spattering.

We chose two pieces to study closely: the first, a drawing of FEMA trailers and the second, a full, colorful drawing of a house and swing set we called "Polka Dots."

Within this small collection, Janey's picture labeled "FEMA trailers" appears to be the most influenced by the flood experience. The drawing is of four rectangles representing the trailer houses that many people, including Janey's family, moved into when their homes became uninhabitable. The picture is on manila-colored paper and was drawn using six crayons of different colors. The crayon strokes are light so the picture has a pastel appearance to it, and therefore does not appear colorful even though variety of colors are used. The objects are outlines only and have not been filled in. At first, the picture appears to have been drawn quickly and indifferently, but upon closer study it becomes clear that Janey has taken great care in the placement of lines. An example of this is the exactness used to avoid placing green grass on the purple zigzag steps.

The four rather large rectangles contained in the picture are repeated and placed parallel to each other. They run diagonally from lower left to upper right. The rectangles look quite

similar, but there are variations in the way the windows are placed and in their colors and shapes. All but one of the windows have been centrally placed at the ends of the rectangles. The rectangles are outlined in purple crayon and each has a purple zigzag placed in the center of the left side, giving the appearance of either steps or smoke. Grass has been added along the sides of each "trailer." In addition to the rectangular-shaped trailers, Janey has added a diagonal strip that appears to be a road that runs parallel to the rectangles. Extra strokes fill the upper left corner that may be either sunrays or perhaps wheat stubble. The only other object in the picture is a dark circular object with two legs, placed at the end of one rectangle. There is a purple swirl within the circle, reminiscent of a barbecue waiting for someone to tend to it. Other than the possible barbecue grill, there are no signs of life -- no people, no cars on the road, no doors in the trailers. The picture is stark and repetitive.

In contrast to the FEMA picture, the second picture we selected for study, now called "Polka Dots," is bright and colorful. Our first impression of this picture was that it was a page from coloring book with dark outlines calling to be filled in -- which Janey did. The picture contains a house, a swing set, two clouds, a sun, and the lawn, all outlined in black and colored in different colors. The picture, made on newsprint, was colored with "stamper markers," each having a different shape on the point. Janey used these markers to fill the objects with dots. This picture, like the other, has a slant to the objects, but from lower right to upper left, except for the sun, which slants in the opposite direction. The lines making up the shapes appear to have been completed meticulously with only a few extraneous lines, again suggesting great care in making this picture. The shaped dots are distributed uniformly on the objects except in two places -- on the swing set and on one area of the clouds. There is also a different type of dots at the corners along the outlines of the objects. These dots suggest a stop/start motion as Janey

drew, causing the marker to release extra ink. And while this picture is also lacking people, it is very much alive with people-related objects.

Because Janey's collection is very small, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the differences and similarities between her flood picture and other work. When comparing the two very different pictures that we viewed closely, we found that unlike the FEMA trailer drawing, which has a subdued, static appearance, the polka dot picture is colorful and bright with a sense of anticipation to it that someone may stop by and play.

Heidi

Heidi, the second child whose work we studied, was four years old when the flood occurred in 1997. Her family, which appears frequently in her visual works, consists of a mother, a father, a brother and a pet cat. The family was evacuated from their home, but their house was not flooded. Heidi's mother shared the collection of drawings with us for this study. Although some of Heidi's drawings were lost when her mother's office was flooded, there are 33 pieces in the collection, covering a period of two years. Most of the work is done in marker and crayon; however, there are two ink drawings and one painting. As we described these works, the variety and brightness of colors stood out in the collection with blue and green being dominant. There are many varied shapes (circles, squares, triangles, rectangles) visible in the pictures. Circles appear to be the most prevalent shape represented. Dots appear as part of the composition in several pictures as one way of punctuating the ends of legs and arms. Many of the pieces are framed by grass on the bottom and sky on the top. Several are framed on either side by two trees. One has a four-sided cut out frame around the composition.

Heidi includes twos in several of the pictures (nested eggs, framing trees), and there are multiples of items in many (flowers or balloons, heads, figures). There is a feeling of completion

and confidence to Heidi's pictures. In all of the works in the collection, only one figure is scratched out. Most of the lines in her drawing indicate firm, even and consistent pressure.

The themes and motifs of people, animals, suns, rainbows and smiling faces emerge in Heidi's collected works. The most notable of these, people, often appear in lines facing forward as if the characters were posing for the picture. There is seldom a variation in the size of the figures, although where motifs are repeated, color and shape vary. The people are usually smiling and appear happy. The eyes of the characters stand out in the pictures. Heidi frequently elaborates the head area with a variety of hairdos, hats, etc. For example, from a close study of one of her works dated July 1997, our descriptive response included the following:

There are four people represented, all facing forward and smiling. Each character is a bright uni-color; one is pink, one is purple, and two are orange or rust. Each of the four figures is drawn with hair; the pink (girl) has long hair, the purple figure has a curly mop on top of her head and looks older and the two orange or rust figures (male) have flat horizontal lines on their heads. All four figures are smiling. Each has a definite round colored circle for a nose. The eyes are large and round with what appears to be pupils included. There's a bright yellow sun in the upper right hand corner and a multicolored rainbow on the opposite side with six colors discretely drawn next one another; none of the colors overlap. The picture is well centered and framed with grass at the bottom and blue sky at the top.

In contrast to Heidi's other colorful works, one picture, which was drawn around the same time as the piece described above (July 1997), was created with only shades of green and blue with black outlines. The picture is dominated by a large green house with a blue roof and with five characters inside bound by windows (There is annotation on the back side of the picture that states, "Each family member in their (sic) window, including (the family cat)."). Unlike Heidi's other drawings, there is no sense of happiness in this picture. The smiling faces that were part of each person or other drawings are missing. Three of the characters have no mouths, and none of them have clothes. The characters resemble people Heidi drew in the earliest pieces of the collection. In the upstairs window, the person who we understand to be the mother does have

a smile on her face and has her usual poofy hairdo. The house is outlined in black and has seven different shaped windows. There are figures seen in four of the windows who appear to be floating and looking forward out of the windows. The figures are together in the house, but are separated from each other. Two of the windows are empty; one is colored in with green. In the lower right window (the largest one) is a table, a chair and two figures with the familiar flat line hair. The chair is drawn from a side perspective and appears pushed under the two-legged table. The picture lacks context; nothing else is visible but the house and what can be seen in the windows. The variety and color that is characteristic of Heidi's other work is missing in this piece. This is the only piece where a black marker was used to outline the figures in the work. The color is mostly contained inside the lines drawn with the marker, but the strokes that color the picture are made in a variety of directions and with varied degrees of pressure, giving a less restrained appearance than many of her other pieces.

The descriptive study of Heidi's work indicates that people are a strongly repeated theme. Many of her pictures appear to include her family. She pays particular attention to the head and eye areas of people. Her work looks planned and completed with confidence. She seems to use color to help make things discrete and definable. Discrete parts of her pictures make up the whole, which is determined by boundaries.

Sam

Sam, who was seven years old at the time of the Grand Forks flood of 1997 and his mother were evacuated when the dikes broke. Sam's mother shared his work with us -- a large collection of 198 pictures that she had saved beginning when he was four years old. His work was collected in several large folders and the 18" x 24" pads of chart paper where he completed his drawings directly into the pads, resulting in "artist's sketchbooks."

His pictures vary greatly in size -- from huge sheets of newsprint to small notepad sketches. He appears to use whatever is on hand to complete his work -- manila paper, newsprint, lined writing paper, sketch paper, parchment, file cards, finger painting paper, and the covers and backs of the sketch books. One of his large pen and crayon drawings has been mounted and framed and is ready for hanging. He primarily uses pencil or pen and sometimes markers to sketch his ideas. When he chooses to add color to his work, he uses markers, crayons, watercolors, chalk, and craypas, accurately portraying the colors of the objects, whether animals, vehicles, or uniforms. While most of his work consists of sketches, when he does use color the result is bright and striking.

Sam has distinct themes that are repeated frequently: many aquatic creatures such as fish, sharks, whales, and sea monsters; dinosaurs in great variety; vehicles -- including those that travel on land, in air, and on water; ecology; space ships; basketball; and all forms of wild animals. He has also captured the flood experience and incorporated his favored themes into his drawings of it. For example, one view of the murky floodwater has a jet ski driver skimming over the surface and two flying fish lifting a container from the water. The fire in downtown Grand Forks is shown with many vehicles coming to the rescue.

The use of themes is sometimes reflected in series of works, such as his collection of seven drawings, each of a player from a different basketball team and the logo of that team. He also completed a series of different kinds of dinosaurs, each drawn accurately and labeled. He frequently combines themes as he did in the flood picture, resulting in drawings such as his pictures of underwater creatures playing a game of basketball, and of jet skis and snowmobiles appearing in surprising places. Battles take place among many of his characters -- dinosaurs battle with dinosaurs, sea monster against anaconda, airplanes and space ships fighting with each

other and with sea monsters and dinosaurs. One quite dramatic picture portrays an eagle in battle with jet fighters.

Sam represents many visual perspectives of the objects he sketches, including views from underwater or on water, on land, in the air, and emerging from one to the next. Sea creatures are frequently shown with bodies beneath the water and heads, mouths agape and teeth bared, above the surface. Fish are shown swimming in the water, but also in the air above the water as if they had leaped out of the water to avoid the fishing line that is shown near them. In several of the drawings, he placed vehicles under the water, and we wondered if he was trying to show perspectives from both water and land.

The pictures in this collection appear to be drawn with a sense of the audience in mind. Not only does Sam draw with great care, capturing amazingly correct detail and gesture, but he also communicates through labels. While the accuracy of his drawings provides the viewer with enough information to interpret the content easily, he leaves nothing to chance. In a drawing titled "*Contry* (sic) *creek*" and "*Contry* (sic) *woods forest*," he also includes the labels, "*deer, baby deer, fish, baby fish, frog, baby frog, timber wolf, baby timber wolf, mountain lion, snakes, baby snake.*" In one elaborate dinosaur picture, he has drawn a variety of dinosaurs and then repeats the animal at the top of the page, labels it, and instructs the viewer to "*find one*," or "*find tow* (sic)." In his basketball series of five teams, he notes, "*The Raptors are the Best!*"

People seldom appear among Sam's drawings, but when they do it is as actors in the events taking place. Of the 198 individual pictures, people appear in only eighteen. Even though he draws animals, vehicles and other objects with great detail and accuracy, the people in his drawings lack this detail. For example, in his basketball player series, facial features are drawn in only a cursory fashion without hair and with a simple curved line for a smile and dots for eyes,

while the uniforms they wear reveal many features of the logos that represent their teams. Drivers of his jet skis, snowmobiles, and airplanes are completed with a single, continuous line and sometimes are replaced with his more preferred dinosaur-like creatures.

We compared Sam's drawings of the flood events with his other work, looking for commonalities and differences. We looked at two in particular, one that we called "Black River;" the other referred to as "Come Hell and High Water," a slogan adopted by the local newspaper. Each of these clearly relates the events of the spring of 1997. Among this collection there were also pictures of other flood events that we examined closely -- the ice storm preceding the flood and several pictures of people fishing in the muddy Red River.

"Black River" is completed on a large sheet of tag board using watercolor, crayon, and chalk. The tagboard is stapled to another of the same size to form a pocket. Unlike most of Sam's other works, this picture does not appear to be drawn in pencil beforehand. The bottom two-thirds of the picture is painted in variable shades of black, giving it a murky look. The few objects in the water have been added afterward, preventing them from clearly standing out. This technique is unusual; in most of Sam's underwater scenes he has colored in the water around the objects, making the objects the central focus of the picture. The objects he chose are very different from those usually appearing in his drawings. He added buildings submerged in the water, one with a label indicating "Ham Lee" or "Harry Lee." He also includes a cat with its legs pointing upward (obviously dead), and something that looks like a lawn mower floating underwater. There are suggestions of other things in the water, but none of them is discernible. Even though this picture has been completed using color, it is largely black and it lacks the brilliance of his other colored works.

The surface events are more like Sam's other pieces. The water's surface is drawn as waves, using a blue crayon. A jet ski, colored blue and green, and a driver in red wearing a helmet, skim the surface of water. In addition, two fish are leaping above the water. They have lines in their teeth that are attached to a container below, floating on the water. While the activity underwater suggests chaos and murkiness, the events above suggest purposeful activity.

The second picture, "Come Hell and High Water," depicts the fire that struck Grand Forks shortly after the dikes broke. It is a watercolor painting, first outlined in pencil and then in thin black marker, before it was filled in with paint. It is drawn on large sheet of manila-colored tag board. A descriptive narrative has been typed and glued to the picture:

There was a burning building and there was a crashed boat. They have a water blaster on the fire department boat. There's a humvee and another boat.

Again, unlike most of Sam's other works, the water is not inhabited by his many water creatures. The action in this picture also takes place above the water. The large, single building with smoke pouring out of it is labeled "1st" in one place and "Fist (sic) Bank" in another. Sam has also helpfully added the word, "water," to one of the hoses on the fireboat. The water in this picture is painted a colorful blue with a strong sense of fullness uncontained by riverbanks. There is no land apparent anywhere in the picture. Sam has used the flood to carry out his interest in vehicles but not his curiosity about underwater activity.

In two other water-related flood pictures, he continues this emphasis on vehicles. One picture is of a Coast Guard boat drawn in elaborate detail, parked by a "road closed" sign, blocked off by sandbags. A person is fishing from the deck. The fish are not visible in the dark brown water but instead are leaping above the water. The other drawing is also of people fishing in a very muddy river, now in its banks, but again with the fish emerging from the water. This picture has a bus on the bridge overhead and a helicopter flying above.

Sam has depicted the flood through his art. He found use for the vehicle theme expressed in his drawings, but not his curiosity about the underwater sea life. The action in the flood pictures all takes place above water as opposed to the very active underwater life noted in many other pictures. He continued to find modes of expression using a variety of art media.

First grade writers

The collection of written work came from a classroom of first graders. Some of the children chose to just write about the flood, but the majority chose to include illustrations with their stories. There were 13 pieces in this collection, each created by a different child. Five of the children used the phrase "the big, big flood" or "the big flood" in their writing, which suggests that the teacher may have included those words when she gave the writing assignment to the children.

As we described these works, various themes emerged that helped us understand the children's perspective on "the big, big flood." Emotions, place or house, leaving/safety, family and friends, and the flood as a thing or a momentary event are the main themes from the collection. Each theme is discussed below, with examples from the children's work included.

The children expressed many feelings and emotions that were felt by themselves or by others. They wrote about being sad, mad, scared and full of fright. One child wrote,

I was scared and sad and mad.

And another child wrote,

wen (when) the flood cam (came) it was sckare (scary). I was rele (really) scard (scared)...It was scare (scar) wen (when) the flood came I wes (was) sred (scared) a lat (lot).

The picture that accompanies this story shows a house full of blue water. The work has the appearance of urgency or of being done quickly. The work was described as " pure fear" by one of us.

Another child showed a matter-of-factness and a recognition that others had feelings about the flood even if he didn't.

I wovint (wasn't) sade (sad) and Mad my sistra (sister) was sade (sad).

One girl expressed the danger the flood created for the children in Grand Forks,

(The) Big flood is danger (ous) Kids can not go by ne (any) flood.

The writing and drawing on this picture have very heavy lines, as if the pencil was being pressed very hard. A helicopter is in the picture above people who are shown yelling, "Help, help." A ladder is extending down from the helicopter to the people. Blue water covers the bottom third of the paper.

Anger and sadness are expressed by another child,

Wane (When) the flood cam (came) to my hose (house) i (I) did not like it one little bite (bit) i (I) was sade (sad) win (when) the flood cam (came) be cose (because) I loved my hose (house)!"

The second theme that emerged very strongly in this collection was that of <u>place or house</u>. Many children drew pictures of a house with water in it and/or around it. Places to which they were evacuated when the flood came to Grand Forks were depicted along with explanations or statements about leaving. For example, a child wrote,

Wen (When) the flood km(came) we had to lv (leave).

Another child drew a picture of two houses with blue water up to the doors and wrote,

The big flood kame (came). My family went to the migy (Bemidji).

A picturesque scene of a long purple building with green grass and with a blue sky above it is illustrated and accompanied by the statements,

I went to a korwit (quiet) towte (town) I had to stay in a homtale (hotel).

The child outlined the edges of the drawing with orange marker, making it resemble a framed picture.

Ten of the 13 children illustrated or wrote about a place or house/home in some way. Each had his/her own understanding of its connectedness to the flood. Variations of the theme can be seen in the following examples:

In the big, big flood, I had to go to my coebins (cousin's) hoes (house).

I had to go to Meerada (Emerado) for the flood

Befor (Before) we livd (lived) in ore (our) house. It was flooded

Before the flood I lived here...and after the flood I moved back here.

I was living at my mam (Mom's) friend's house.

wane (When) the flood cam (came) to my hose (house) i (I) did not like it not one little bite (bit).

Family and/or friends, a third theme that emerged from the children's work, was usually included with explanations of where they had gone or stayed when the flood came.

My family went to the migy (Bemidji). My grandma and grandpa kame (came) too.

In the big, big flood, I had to go to my coebins (cousin's) hoes (house).

...I livd (lived) biy (by) my friend he is 8 yeis (years) oad (old). And I am 7 & I hope I will liv (live) hiear (here) for a long time. And after the flood I moved back.

Six of the 13 pieces in the collection include reference to family, relatives and/or friends in the text. Only one drawing includes people in the illustrations.

The theme of the flood as a momentary event or as a thing disconnected from the river appeared in both the writings and drawings. Only two children made reference to the flood having anything to do with the river and even these statements suggest an understanding of the flood as a thing.

The big flood came. My family went to the migy (Bemidji). My grandma and grandpa kame (came) too. The flood went over the dike.

The flood was in the river and with to you noc sea (went to New York City) ntd They for 10 day (and stayed there for ten days)

Only one child offers an explanation of the cause of the flooding.

Win (When) the flood hapned (happened) the agal's (angels) have'd (have) a bath and win (when) its not stopieg (stopping) rinieg (raining) the angal's (angels) have a shiwr (shower).

This piece includes an illustration of two angels; one taking a bath and one taking a shower.

There were no descriptions or drawings of personal things (e.g. toys) being lost or ruined in the flood, and no perceptions of the flood being long-lasting were indicated.

Contrasts and commonalities

Although the children in our study have many similarities of expression through art and writing, we found that they are first and foremost individuals with styles and views that are uniquely theirs. They draw and write in recognizable ways, using styles and materials that are typical of them. Their focal points of interest reflect who they are and what they are thinking about. We have noted both contrasts and commonalities in style, choice of media, favorite themes, and amount of detail used.

The media used by all of the children in our study are those that are commonly used by young children: markers, crayons, pencil, paint, etc., but most children had a preferred media.

Heidi's pictures were frequently completed in marker or crayon, resulting in bright, colorful drawings. Janey's collection was too small to allow us to draw conclusions, but the majority of her drawings were in crayon or marker also. Sam preferred to sketch. He used pencil or pen to sketch the full detail that is so prevalent in his drawings. He would sometimes add color to his pictures, usually using marker or crayon, but the sketching. came first. Most of the first graders who wrote about the flood used pencils to express their ideas, although a few used markers. Many also drew pictures to accompany their writing. The art included with the writing was completed in crayon or marker. We don't know how much the availability of media, or lack of it, affected the children's choice.

The children's approach to their work is another area in which individuality is revealed. The fullness of expression varied from child to child. Both Janey and Heidi completed a theme without extraneous items. Heidi's drawings of people focused on their appearance with all of the features needed to fully detail their expressions, clothing, hairstyle, and position. Janey's pictures of FEMA trailers and of the polka dot house and swing set each included necessary surroundings -- a road, a sun, a field, grass, etc. -- giving them the appearance of a snapshot of that scene. In contrast, Sam filled his pictures with multiple vehicles and creatures, sometimes surprising us by their inclusion, such as the jet ski zooming over the floodwater devoid of other life. Many of his other works give the appearance of an artist attempting to generate all possible aspects of a theme, producing remarkable fullness. The children's writing also varied in fullness, some filling a page while others included only a simple line or two at the top of a page.

Sam and Heidi included a great deal of detail in their drawings, but in different ways. Heidi was concerned about detail in drawing people while Sam ignored the need for human detail but added precise detail in his drawings of animals, vehicles, uniforms, and action. Janey

included only enough detail to clearly depict a scene. The same variation appeared in the writing. One child described the flood simply and matter-of-factly: *"Before we lived in our house. It was flooded."* Another child explained it with more detail: *"Before the flood I lived here. And I lived by my friend He is 8 years old. And I am 7. & I hope (I) will live here for a long time. And after the flood I moved back here."*

Something common to all of the children was the appearance of confidence in their work and how it was completed. There were very few signs of corrections made in their artwork. We observed a lack of erasures and few incidences of coloring over an unwanted object. Each piece was presented as complete without change. Although Sam's work did not include corrections, in some cases he would complete a partial picture and then start again. This was especially true in his sketchbooks. This confidence was not observed in the writing. Children frequently revised or corrected by writing over or crossing out words or letters.

A great variety of themes appear in the collections of work we studied. Each child had themes that were revisited over and over, some the same as others used and some that were unique to that particular child's work. In Heidi's work, people were almost always included as the focus of the pictures; while for Janey, home, which appeared in two of her seven pictures, may be a beginning theme. Sam was more interested in animals, sea creatures and vehicles, often in battle with one another. He seldom included houses, and people only appeared when they were needed to carry out the more significant action such as drivers, rescuers, or fishermen on his elaborate boats. Even when the theme was assigned, as in the first graders' writing, preferred themes emerged -- place, people, emotions.

There is a difference in the ideas depicted in the work, depending on whether the children are drawing or writing. Themes such as emotions and moods are more easily expressed using

words. Heidi's drawing of her family looking out of the windows of her house was interpreted as stark and somber, and Sam's "Black River" drawing appears to be ominous. But there is no doubt about the feelings expressed by the child who wrote, *"When the flood came to my house I did not like it not one little bit I was sad when the flood came because. I loved my house!"* The theme of leaving and returning is another that appears in the writing, but not the art. Perhaps drawing more adequately conveys a snapshot in time, while words permit more description of movement through time.

Many of the children chose to use both drawing and writing to express themselves. First graders who are just becoming proficient in writing added drawings to supplement their ideas; Sam added labels to his drawings to give clarity to what he was attempting to portray.

All of the collections of work revealed that the children were responding to the flood experience through their art and writing, frequently modifying their more usual approach. As in our previous descriptive studies of children work, we found that the children's art and writing to have meaning and purpose. The events surrounding the flood had individual meaning for the children, and their impressions became visible in the works they produced. We had multiple pieces of work from the three children in our study -- Janey, Heidi, and Sam -- and each child's collection had at least one flood picture that stood out from the others. Janey's collection, while small, contained a depiction of her home in FEMA trailer park after the flood. Heidi's green house, while not labeled as a flood picture, was created a few months after the flood occurred and contrasted sharply with her other works. We felt quite confident that this drawing could have been produced in response to Heidi's flood experience. Sam's extensive collection had many pictures that clearly related to the events surrounding the flood and many that were labeled by his mother as being "flood pictures."

There were many variations in how the flood was depicted by individual children. Some children filled the page with water or showed houses and other objects submerged. Many colored the water up to the front door of a house or had a waterline drawn in the windows. The uncontainable nature of rising water during a flood came to mind with these pictures. In the "Black River," Sam portrayed buildings submerged and had objects barely visible in the murky water he painted. No land or riverbank was included. The uncontainable nature of the flood was also seen in the museum collections and in the outreach collection. Both of these group collections included the work of older children, which also perhaps explains the illustrations of sandbags that became more prominent in each of these collections. These children were more likely involved in the sandbagging efforts by residents and neighbors of the communities up and down the Red River Valley of North Dakota and Minnesota. Schools closed and all able-bodied citizens were encouraged to participate in the attempts to contain the river.

Some children's work gave the impression that the flood was a thing or an event that came to their house. As previously noted, this was particularly evident in the children's writings.

Wen (When) the flood km (came) we had to lv (leave).

The big flood kame (came). My family went to the migy (Bemidji).

wane (When the flood cam (came) to my hose (house) i (I) did not like it not one little bite (bit).

This characterization is less obvious in the children's art, but even in Heidi's green house, family members are staring straight out of the windows giving the impression that they are seeing an unsettling or unfamiliar event or thing. But the lack of expression on the faces reinforces the image that the people may be viewing a strange happening.

Sam's flood pictures showed a different understanding of the water than in his other drawings where underwater creatures and scenes were frequently detailed. In the picture "Come Hell and High Water," Sam included the action characteristic of his work, but the water did not include his typical underwater activity or detailed creatures. Action was occurring above the water with boats roaring and buildings burning but the murky floodwater was not inhabited. As previously mentioned, in two other flood-related pictures, this same variation in Sam's usual motif appeared.

The museum collection revealed similar depictions of the flood as a thing. One child drew the river with a face. Two eyes and a mouth were clearly outlined in the river. Another child's work in a collage included the words "I hate you flood!" in a bubble near her illustration of the water surrounding a town.

Home or place is a common theme that was developed in many of the pictures and writings about the flood. This can be seen in Janey's carefully drawn picture of the FEMA trailer park; in Heidi's unusual green house with family members each staring out of separate windows; in Sam's powerful depiction of the burning building in downtown Grand Forks; and in the moving stories written by the first graders about where they went and stayed in the "the big, big flood." This same theme was seen in the additional group collections we viewed. More variations on place appeared in these older children's collections, but place remained central to much of the work created. In addition to houses, we saw many other places included, such as playgrounds, airports, football fields and roads. Most of them were portrayed partially or totally submerged in water. Furniture (tables, chairs, refrigerators) appeared more frequently in the group collections, and more variations in visual perspectives surfaced. Aerial views, side views, and front views were utilized in the drawings.

Children's expression of emotion is another common thread that appeared in many of the children's writings and drawings about the flood. This was more easily recognized in the children's writings where the words "scared," "angry," "mad" and "sad" appeared. However, even in the drawings, emotions appeared frequently in our descriptions of children's pictures. The stark nature of Janey's FEMA picture of the desolate trailer park projected a bleak, grim perspective to the flood. The light pastel colors she used reinforced a gloomy or cheerless image. Heidi's drawing of the green house was lacking the happiness she created in all her other works. The smiling faces that appeared on all her other people were missing from the figures in this piece. Each person was staring out of a window with little emotion conveyed. Again, Heidi's use of color intensifies the unpleasantness that the picture radiates.

In contrast, some children expressed a matter-of-fact perspective of the flood. Again, this was more visible in the written work, but the statements such as,*"When the flood came we had to leave"* and *"Before we lived in our house. It was flooded"* give the impression that little emotion was associated with the disaster. The flood happened, and this is what they did.

Implications for this kind of study

Our findings are tentative and not overgeneralizable, based as they are on the study of the work of only three children and a small collection of writing; they are, however, not without groundedness or meaning. As adult human beings, our work is in one arena for understanding who we are and what we are about. The work of children, in play, drawing, dancing, singing, building, talking and writing is similarly expressive of the emerging understandings they bring to their worlds. Both we and children are at least partially knowable in our work (Carini, 1982), and if we are to respond in meaningful ways to children in times such as floods, it is important that we pay close, respectful attention to children's work in order to find, see and understand what is

present, visible, and knowable about their thinking. It is easy to see when watching children draw, write, sculpt or build that there is great purposefulness and thought put into what they are doing. This work of theirs is not usually done without thought, and it should not be treated in a light way by adults. For children, at least as much as for adults, their "works" are a language, a mode of expression of ways of thinking and styles of doing (Edwards, Gandini & Torman, 1993). Our own work with the drawing and writing of these children confirmed this for us once again.

Children respond to and think about their worlds in uniquely personal ways. In order to make these personal perspectives on the world visible, close observation and thought such as the kind we were able to engage in is very helpful. Understanding of unique perspectives on a flood, for instance, cannot occur if a singular piece of work is studied in isolation. The expressive work should be studied within a rich collection of work that has occurred over as much time as possible. Our understanding of Sam's perspectives and thought seemed much richer to us than our understanding of Janey's, largely because Sam's collection was much larger and spanned four years instead of just part of one. Just as time plays a role in the collecting of work, the importance of having enough time to "live" with the work and our ideas about it was important. Of course, some adults will not have this luxury when they must immediately meet the needs of children, especially during or following a disaster such as a flood. Nonetheless, to the degree that such time is available, it should be capitalized upon, especially when looking for patterns or threads they run through both an individual child's work and those that run through the collective work of several children.

Bringing multiple perspectives to bear collectively on the study of the work is also important. When more than one person is looking at children's work, the varying perspectives

allow more of the work to be visible to all. Multiple perspectives allow for corrections of perception to be made so clarity can emerge and for ambiguity to remain when otherwise one person might seem certain. Collective thought applied to the understanding of what children were expressing seemed to us much richer and productive than if any one of us had tried this undertaking alone. Perhaps most importantly, our work as a group enabled us to remain descriptive in our treatment of the work. When a temptation to over-interpret, to psychologize or explain arose, we were able to remind ourselves to be descriptive and to keep our growing understandings grounded in the work itself. This enabled us to continue our work over time, always leaving ourselves open to see new things in the work.

What the children told us

In our study of children's work, we found clear indications that, not surprisingly, the flood experience affected these young children. We noted signs of this in the themes that appeared in their art and writing. We saw changes in their more typical approach to expressing themselves in their work about the flood experience. We heard their thoughts expressed in the writing. And we learned how important it is to listen closely to what children were telling us through their work, because what they revealed was not always what we expected.

People around the nation responded generously and tried to ease the distress of the children involved in the flood by collecting toys -- stuffed animals, games, puzzles, books, etc. -- and distributing them to families who had been evacuated. Truckloads of toys to replace the things children lost poured into the community. But much to our surprise, the children never included lost or new possessions in their work. We did not see toys depicted in the drawings or note it in the writing. There was no indication of lost teddy bears, missing trucks, or favorite dolls. There was no mention of the favorite blanket left behind or the Big Wheel that was

washed away. Possessions were also conspicuously absent in the collections from the older children; only an occasional boom box or floating box of toys appeared.

If lost possessions were not what was on the minds of these young children, what was? To these children, people and place were what concerned them. Their family and friends who were with them or separated from them during and after the flood, and the people who were there to put out the fires, fly the helicopters and drive the boats and humvees were prominent in their work. The theme of home and place also appeared frequently, whether it was a child's particular home or the places where the children went when they had to leave: Janey's FEMA trailer; Heidi's home containing all of her family members; children writing about "I went to a quiet town," "I had to stay in a hotel," and "...I had to go to my cousin's house." We interpret the themes of people and place to represent security for young children. How will they be most likely to be kept safe during a time of disaster -- by having caring adults around them, a secure place away from the flood to stay, and a home to return to.

Sam, the oldest of the three children studied, did not refer to home or house. His focus was on the slightly different theme of "place." He depicted the burning building, the closed road, and the flooded buildings. We noted this theme in the collections of older children. In the art of the outreach collection and in the museum collection, we saw houses, playgrounds, schools, football fields and other places. The older children's community is larger and this appeared in their work.

It became apparent that at least some of the children did not have a clear understanding of what a flood is. They described it as a thing that invaded the community and then left. It seemed to have little relationship to the river itself. This was represented overtly by a child who actually drew a face in the water. In the writing samples the children referred to the flood as if it was a scary thing that just appeared. In Heidi's drawing of her house, her family peers out of the

windows without their usual smiles, as if staring at something outside the house. And Sam's drawings of the flood never included his usual lake and sea creatures. His flood was depicted as darkly ominous and empty of life, quite different than his numerous other water scenes.

The flood affected all of the children emotionally. This was most clearly expressed in the writing where the children described their emotions. They wrote that they were scared, mad, sad; that they "didn't like it one bit." This was less obvious in the art but even there we saw indications. The usual use of bright colors changed to subdued tones in the flood pictures. Details that were present in most of the other works were not present in the flood pictures. Drawings of Heidi's people were expressionless instead of with the usual bright smiles.

The results have implications for the adults who care for children. First of all, caregivers must listen carefully to what the children are telling them through their words, actions, and work. They should remember that children might have very different concerns than those that adults assume they have, and that each child may have concerns different from other children. To help children deal with any disaster, they need to be given the opportunity to tell what is of concern to them, and then adults need to respond to these concerns.

To most children, the people in their lives represent security. Meeting children's emotional needs may mean supporting their caregivers as well as the children themselves. As caregivers struggle to respond to a crisis, they have less time and energy to spend with their children. Parents may need emotional support as well as physical assistance so that they, in turn, can nurture their children. People who are concerned about the children will need to focus some of their efforts on the needs of the caregivers.

Children also have a need to know about the safety of the other people in their lives -- their siblings, grandparents, friends and teachers. Talking to children about where these people

are is important, even if they have not been affected by the disaster. Emergency workers who are on the front lines of the disaster should also be remembered. Talking about how people are helping by sandbagging, that firefighters have their trucks available, that humvee drivers are out there keeping an eye on things, may be quite reassuring to children. Children may also benefit from being included in some of the flood activities, such as wrapping sandwiches for sandbaggers or taking a drink to the person watching the pumps.

Place is also important to children. Include children in the discussions about where the family will be staying. If safe, it may be helpful to include them in the process of recovery. Even small children can go along to select household supplies to replace those items lost. Asking and valuing their opinions about "which dishes should we get for our home" can give them a sense of control over a difficult situation. The children need a place of retreat also, and caregivers need times when they can work without the responsibility of watching over their safety. If possible, adults should try to have a familiar place for children to go as they wait out a disaster. A child care setting or school classroom that is similar to what they left may offer needed security, especially if they are comfortable about what is happening to the people in their lives.

Because young children may be confused about what has occurred, a post-flood curriculum that includes a look at how floods actually happen could help them better understand the event and perhaps alleviate their anxieties. In planning these activities, first discuss the children's experiences with them and find out what they already know and what questions they have. As we know, play is an excellent means of building an understanding of an event. One group of preschool children spent many days building rivers in the sand, constructing sandbag dikes, pouring water into their sandbox river, and watching the water overflow the dikes. Their

teachers added books to the library and provided materials to support their play. The children planned their constructions and in so doing, developed a clearer understanding of floods. Filling real sandbags and recording how many shovels of sand it takes, lifting, weighing, and stacking bags; using a water table pump to empty buckets of water, and experimenting with how well different materials repel water are some activities that will help children comprehend the events that they hear the adults around them discussing. And, of course, drawing and writing about their experiences and photographing their constructions will be crucial to keeping a record of their discoveries. The success of such a curriculum is dependent on how clearly children's voices are heard, whether in their work or in conversations, and how closely the curriculum matches their questions.

Conclusion

We looked closely at the work of these young children to learn how they responded to the Red River Valley flood of 1997. Studies such as this, while informative, are not generalizable to the experiences of others. This study gave us insight into these particular children's views, but it also raised many questions. Do other children respond similarly to disaster? Do their reactions to different types of disasters, such as fire, tornado, earthquake, or hurricane, resemble the responses of the children to this particular flood? We saw indications of differences among the children of different ages. How much does age affect children's reactions? Further investigation of the work of older children is needed to give us a fuller understanding. We noticed a difference in the type of information shared through visual literacy versus print literacy. What does this suggest when helping children understand a disaster? And most importantly, what is the best way to help children who have experienced a devastating event? Looking closely, with others, at the work of children is the beginning of this understanding.

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References and Resources

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Although live interviews, personal observation, conversations, faxes and emails created the foundation for this monograph, there were numerous other sources that were used. These include the following reports:

1) Olsen, G.W. (1998), Excellent Beginnings Planning Grant Final Report. Grand Forks: University of North Dakota.

2) Olsen, G.W., Shaeffer, P. and Chiappa, T.(1998) Where Should We Turn? What Should We Do? Grand Forks: University of North Dakota.

3) Hanhan, S., Shreve, R. and Danbom, K. (1998) Wen the flood km we had to lv, Grand Forks: University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

4) Fuller, M.L. (1998), Diversity at Lake Agassiz School: 'We are all one family and we have to take care of one another.' In, "Under Construction: Excellence in Education at Lake Agassiz Elementary School," published by the College of Education and Human Development, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

5) Sherwood, C. Gregoire, D. and Iverson, D. (1998) Creating Original Opera at Lake Agassiz Elementary School. In, "Under Construction: Excellence in Education at Lake Agassiz Elementary School," published by the College of Education and Human Development, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

6) Schmisek, G. (1998) The Extended Day Program. In, "Under Construction: Excellence in Education at Lake Agassiz Elementary School," published by the College of Education and Human Development, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

7) Harris, M. and Bakke, J. (1998) ,Lake Agassiz Professional Development School. In, "Under Construction: Excellence in Education at Lake Agassiz Elementary School." Published

by the College of Education and Human Development, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

8) Johnson, S. and Gates, S. (1998), The Resident Teacher Program. In, "Under Construction: Excellence in Education at Lake Agassiz Elementary School." Published by the College of Education and Human Development, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

There were also numerous unpublished reports considered, including summaries of losses from the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks Public School Districts. I would also like to thank the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks Chambers of Commerce and the Grand Forks City Information Center for their assistance in securing facts and figures, and refer the reader to their websites for more information about life in Greater Grand Forks and our recovery since the flood. (http://www.grandforks.com; http://www.und.edu; http:northscape.com). In addition, the Grand Forks Convention and Visitor's Bureau was most helpful in securing photographs of the Greater Grand Forks lifestyle.

The portraits you see throughout the monograph were taken by photographer Steve Silverman, my husband and partner in life and work. Thanks, Steve, for bringing out the best in everyone you photographed.

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And finally, thanks to you, the reader, for your time and attention in seeking out new ways to help yourself and your students. This monograph was created for you. It is this author's hope, and that of all those quoted within it, that your recovery process from disaster be swift and sure.

Robin L. Silverman,
Grand Forks, 1999.